

COMMUNICATING SCRIPTURE THROUGH
TECHNOLOGY IN A POST
MODERN GENERATION

Gregory Ved'alonte Baker, Sr.

Bachelor, Florida A&M University, 2001
M.Div., Interdenominational Theological Center, 2006

Mentors

Sir Walter Mack, Jr., D.Min.
Harry White, D.Min.

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Date: _____

Approved:

Faculty Mentor(s):

Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies

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ABSTRACT

COMMUNICATION OF SCRIPTURE USING TECHNOLOGY IN THE POST MODERN GENERATION

by

Gregory Ved'alonte Baker, Sr.

Mentors

Sir Walter Mack, Jr., D.Min.

Harry L. White, Jr., D.Min.

The purpose of this project is to explore social networking as a ministering tool at Beaver Ruin Road Baptist Church, Norcross, Georgia. The hypothesis is that if a reluctant and resistant congregation is introduced to appropriate and safe technology in ministry via email, text messaging and Facebook, a great appreciation and application of social networking mediums can be deployed to increase evangelism, discipleship, stewardship and spiritual maturity. Journals, pre and post questionnaires and interviews were conducted. At the end of the project, 10 persons were communicating scripture through technology, whereas in the beginning three persons were communicating scripture through technology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher would like to thank the Creator for the opportunity of servanthood first and foremost. Special thanks also to the researcher's wife Tameka Baker, and children, Gregory V. Baker, II, Kennedy A. Baker, and Braxton O. Baker. Without you this could not have been possible. It has been a major sacrifice to show continuing support throughout the entire process of achievement. The Beaver Ruin Road Baptist Church family has also shown great underpinning that cannot go unnoticed. The researcher would also like to take a look backward for a small moment and pay honor to the late Bishop D. L. Bright (grandfather). The fuel for the fire came from this man who modeled a passion for finishing well. Several individuals have played a key role in the researcher's life, and the list is too long to name each and everyone. To Dr. Sir Walter Mack, Dr. Harry White, and Dr. Mark Lomax, an incredible thank-you for your leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Mike Slaughter in his book, *Out On The Edge: A Wakeup Call for Church Leaders On The Edge Of The Media Reformation*, says that electronic media and social networking technology is to the *Reformation* of the twenty-first century what Gutenberg's press was to the Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. TV, having come of age in the 1950s, has changed the way we learn and our perceptions of what makes sense. The effective congregation of the twenty-first century will be part of the Church that makes use of multimedia and social networking mediums. The New Reformation will speak the language of the culture and employ the communication technology that shapes the culture.¹

Slaughter goes on to say, it might seem too strong to say that there is no alternative for the viability of the future Church, but he means to be even more bold in claiming that the Media Reformation is a life or death issue for the Church.²

As a concerned pastor, the researcher of this project is also concerned about the future direction of the Church. He is interested in introducing cutting edge technology to the church to enhance the viability of spiritual relationships and communication of existing members. When existing members become comfortable with the use of social networking technology mediums as a way of reaching people for the Kingdom of God,

¹Mike Slaughter, *Out On The Edge: A Wakeup Call for Church Leaders On The Edge Of The Media Reformation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 25.

²*Ibid.*

the church will become a part of possibly the fastest growing communication paradigm shift the world has seen to date.

In Chapter One, the researcher will detail his spiritual journey and how it connects to his ministry context. The emphasis of communication and relationship building in the researcher's life will be shared in light of how ministry is used to connect with others. The researcher discovered that the congregants in his context were not communicating well, and struggled somewhat to build relationship with one another. This sparked a passion within the researcher to create a model that would speak to this dilemma. The critical component of the model would have to speak in a post-modern voice and the researcher will aim to shed light in this area.

In Chapter Two, the researcher exposes several models related to technology and how they have impacted ministry. The researcher will show how he expects this model to advance the efforts of ministry already in place through the use of technology in a postmodern generation. There is a misconception in the ministry context of the researcher that technology isolates individuals from one another. In this chapter the researcher will substantiate his claim on technology's role in connecting lives.

In Chapter Three, the researcher will expose the biblical support related to communicating the gospel in new ways. There will be Old Testament and New Testament scriptures that validate the researcher's claim that the Bible is indeed evidence of how the Word of God is unchanged and yet fluidic through time. This chapter will also include historical and theological support. The historical aspects of this chapter will seek to show how technology has played a role over time from a ministry perspective as well as

secular. There are several examples demonstrating how technology has been used and continues to be used in a postmodern generation.

The theological framework in this chapter reveals the researchers understanding of God related to Incarnation. The researcher builds his argument based on the teachings of Karl Barth and Paul Tillich. Other philosophical voices will be used to show considerable backing such as Immanuel Kant.

In Chapter Four, the researcher will discuss methodology and project design. The hypothesis is that if a reluctant and resistant congregation is introduced to appropriate and safe technology in ministry via email, text messaging and Facebook, a great appreciation and application of social networking mediums can be deployed to increase evangelism, discipleship, stewardship and spiritual maturity. Technology will allow the sharing of ideas and different perspectives among members and prospective members. The researcher wants to find out if social networking via technology can be used as a ministry tool that permits connection through communication. The researcher would also like to know if this dialogue will increase based on more opportunities to speak about scripture through the use of technology. The researcher is seeking to understand why there is a lack of interest in communicating scripture and yet there is a great level of interest in using technology in a secular setting. Is it possible to combine what is daily habit with what is unusual habit to increase the daily reading of the scriptures?

In Chapter Five the researcher opens the door to the exact happenings over the six week period. The researcher will share the lightning quick details of week to week dialogue through high-speed internet, email, and text messaging. There will be inserts of word by word conversation to show the level of communication and how the participants

have been impacted. It is the hope of the researcher that this chapter will give future researchers a glimpse into how to advance his efforts further.

Chapter Six will build on the previous chapter and provide a more detailed glance at the true life experience of context and researcher. The overall goal of this chapter is to give the researcher a change to unravel his heart related to the experiences in building this model. This will be an opportunity for the passion for progression and relationship building based on this model to come out of the researcher. He will share struggles and triumphs and provide what is felt to be the overall synopsis of his findings.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Historical Context

The human predicament that resides in the researcher's context is in relation to a lack of communication. The researcher postures to claim that if a tool is placed in the hand of the communicator that will help them it should be used. The emphasis is geared toward a direction that maximizes opportunity. Beaver Ruin Road Baptist Church was founded in 1974. Over the past five to seven years the Church has experienced a dramatic shift in demographics. The demographical shift has affected the congregation as well as the surrounding community.

Throughout this shifting, the main sanctuary that was built to seat 200 persons has not been modified for increased numbers based on a lack of growth. There have been minimal advances in technology to reach congregants or community. A Family Life Center was added less than 5 years ago to address some of the needs in the community. Information found on the Gwinnett county Chamber of Commerce website reveals the following, "According to the U.S. Census, Gwinnet's population has nearly doubled in each decade over the past 30 years, adding almost 348,000 residents since 1990 alone."¹

¹Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce, "Economy and Demographics," <http://www.gwinnettchamber.org/Economy-Demographics.1845.0.html> (accessed September 14, 2010).

The researcher is curious to find out what can be done to reach these residents in this ministry context via technology. The apparent realization is that communication and relationship building are vital to connecting with families in the community.

The shift experienced by the ministry context of the researcher has included cultural and socioeconomic change. For instance the congregation has shifted from predominantly white to eighty plus percentage of African Americans. The researcher is the first African American pastor to serve in the life of this congregation. The ironic similarity in this positioning of leadership relates to the researcher's first year in high school in a rural community in Florida. A monumental shift in cultural change caused an amazing unsettling in the life of the high school students. There was a riot on the student campus involving race related issues.

The researcher along with athletes of different races were thrown into leadership positions of communicating peace based on a common bond related to their relationship on the football field. Unknowingly, these events were a piece of the journey that would prepare the researcher as pastor of a congregation who had gone through struggles of expectance and shift related to culture over the years.

Many of the congregants were raised in rural areas during childhood and had several things in common with the researcher's childhood. The synergy between researcher and context was congruent on many levels. This was important in terms of how the researcher communicated with the congregation. In an effort to provide growth, the researcher sought to build on this solid foundation of commonalities. The levels of resistance increased dramatically with efforts to introduce innovative methods of doing ministry that would reach into a post-modern generation.

Beaver Ruin Road Baptist Church has been renamed once, and has had nine pastors and one interim serving on several occasions over their thirty-six year history. The researcher contends that relationship building and communication from leadership has been extremely limited over the life of the church. The tenure of pastoral leadership has not exceeded 5 years per term. The reluctant attitudes towards change and embracing newer ideas can be directly attributed to unstable leadership. Stability and control are the comfortable sitting rooms of consciousness and rightly so. The researcher would suggest that this unsettled disposition is what links the ministry context with himself.

This conclusion is drawn from the upbringing of the researcher in a single parent home. Although efforts of stability were provided from extended family, the absence of a father in the home is what provides camaraderie between researcher and context. The researcher longed for relationship and someone to communicate ideas, genuine love and concern. These opportunities were provided from appreciated alternatives such as a grandfather and uncles. The void however was to have what others had which was a father in the household. This would have provided a consistent opportunity to share in what was felt to be fair to every son.

In the researchers ministry context the fear of instability is assumed to have fractured the possibility of advancing ministry through technology. Connecting is limited to a one dimensional approach that has been able to last over the years of heartbreak. This clinging is also a familiar technique to the researcher based on the desire to not be disappointed. The researcher can remember on several occasions waiting for promises to take root that were spoken with unconcerned hazard. It was often wondered by the researcher what would really connect son with father in relationship in a special way.

There were glimpses of hope over summers spent together, but it was not until the researcher accepted the call to ministry and communicated the gospel in front of his father that a deeper connection developed. The first time the researcher's dad heard him preach, he told the researcher's mother thank you. He told her that she had done a great job raising their son. He told the researcher that he was very proud of him. The researcher shall never forget that day of connection.

The researcher believes that this model related to technology and its role in ministry can provide just as significant of a connection through the communicated love of Jesus Christ that is found in the Bible. In a post-modern generation where there is so much searching, and in a context that has experienced extreme disconnection, it is the researchers claim that God is up to something through the use of technology.

Connecting through Communicating Scripture with Technology

This model is positioned as an example of providing leadership for effective programming in the post-modern generation. The model is addressing social networking and its role in communicating scripture in a postmodern generation. The misconception is that technology is not necessarily needed in a substantial modus. The Christian Education ministry within the researcher's context is and has been greatly appreciated as a standalone unit. Yet it has not proven the obvious potential through technology over the life of the church.

The greatest percentages of the congregation have achieved Bachelor level work. Income varies quite significantly with wide ranges of representation. Most of the households of this context are two or more person households unlike the immediate and

surrounding demographic findings. The white and blue collar statistics are closer in number. There is a worth noted entrepreneurial representation in the congregation.

This postmodern generation proves a closable gap with the consideration of what technology can and will offer in how the gospel is communicated. The researcher stands with an understanding of the possibilities of social networking and its potential to multiply at a greater pace any and all messages. This viewpoint is based on the researcher and his generation and how they communicate. At 32 years of age, it is remarkable that the researcher is three years younger than the life of the context, yet there is a proven acceptance in how technology is perceived by the researcher versus the context. There are several views on the need to communicate effectively. Many scholars have looked at various degrees of how to communicate as well as who to communicate to.

“The inquiry of thought is exposed brightly as it relates to a clear understanding of progression. Everybody who acts, acts in order to change a state of things in the direction of a better state of things.”²

The researcher was trained to think on the level that Paul Tillich expresses regarding what we do to make things better when we act. The backdrop of tutelage provided scenario after scenario for the researcher to see the power of action. It was also opportunity to realize the dependency of action. Responsibility as a farm boy provided fresh life experiences as it related to progression.

Life happens all the time and there are levels of responsibility to nurture some of the happenings in life. Feeding baby chicks and picking beans from the bush were examples of progression that would happen no matter what. The question that required an

²Paul Tillich, *The Spiritual Situation In Our Technical Society* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press. 1988), 84.

answer rested on the shoulders of responsibility. Who would make sure progression did not turn into waste and in the worst case death? If progression is ignored things become chaotic and or uncontained.

As an only child it would be assume that typically hectic responsibility would strangle the notion of excitement and fun. This was not the case in the researcher's life. There was always a willingness to share in the joy of camaraderie. Friendship from the researcher's perspective is more valuable when you are an only child. You seek out ways to communicate with reality in an unreal way.

Most churches seek to connect based on the desire to build relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ. Conflict arises when the Church forgets the necessity of community. Church leaders who have a communal spirit understand more and more the importance of building community as a church family.

"For years my personal focus as a pastor was to make sure people understood Christianity. My energy was devoted to my sermons, and in meetings with church leaders. I was the champion of Christian Education. Over time I realized that what I had created was a group of sinners with head knowledge."³

Relationship building in the opinion of the researcher is a key element. Could it be that technology is not the divider that most claim it to be? Is it an oxymoron to claim technology is a connector? It would seem as if used in addition to what is already in place it could actually be a great opportunity to build relationship versus isolating hearts.

Historian Lerone Bennett said of Frederick Douglass, "He could make people laugh at a slave owner preaching the duties of Christian obedience; could make them see

³George Barna, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), 74.

the humiliation of a Black maiden ravished by a brutal slave owner; could make them hear the sobs of a mother separated from her child.⁴

Post modern leadership must be responsible in facilitating this coming together of people. It is an intense journey of creating impactful maneuvers for the sake of ministry that propels the Church in a direction that is aspired.

In a dysfunctional setting, the researcher suggests that technology is a cutting edge mechanism for the Churches use to provide community. Congregations are comprised mostly of people who barely speak in Church and rarely speak outside of Church. Neighbors in counterfeit examples of community are only qualified to claim this title of neighbor based on their physical house address. If you were to ask a member of the community the telephone number of the person who lives beside them, they would be oblivious. If this is what is considered to be a model of connection and effective communication, we have a grave predicament. Social networking cannot be automatically considered unproductive.

The researcher's passion to connect and communicate has been major in looking at how technology operates to connect in a changing world of responsibility. The researcher believes that action will happen, and it could even at times cause a worse outcome. Tranquility and placation are not targets if they are deficient in what this model seeks to provide, which is an onward movement of ministry through technology.

There are many forces pushing against communication, and to do nothing toward advancement is unacceptable. The likelihood that technology in the form of social

⁴John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable laws of leadership* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Publishing, 1998), 101.

networking could possibly act as an enabler to communication is a great enough assertion to stimulate this project into existence. It is understood that there are various views on technology.

One of the many areas and or views involves understanding and reaching all ages as it relates to communication. Gary McIntosh writes in *One Church Four Generations* to inform us of the different groups and how they relate to the church. He deals with the builders, boomers, busters, and the bridge crew.

“It is beneficial to look at generational viewpoints based on the diversity of thoughts based on age groups. Each generation understands and communicates differently. In 1950 there were 3.9 million households with TV, growing to just over 30 million in 1955 and to 46 million in 1960.”⁵ These changes alone show how change is inevitable with each change in generation.

In the year 2010 flat screen televisions and HD performance has ridiculed the black and white tube models of old. Clearly on many levels the changes that occur have overall advanced how things are accomplished. The importance of what is being handled suggests a needed advancement as it is cradled in a changing world. It cannot be assumed that evaluation and measurement is undeserved. The researcher believes that when we are bold enough to look into every crevice, it will be simple to behold the impact of added support to the area of communication.

The same HD flat screen televisions that are in many households around the country can be used to broadcast announcements in foyers for passing congregants who are anxious to communicate in relevant ways. Sending emails to smart phones that

⁵Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 76.

operate at 4G speed are the cutting edge of how post moderns are communicating.

Ministry is at our fingertips and we don't even know it.

The researcher uses a Kindle from time to time to catch up on readings that he can download at a moment's notice. The Church is filled with individuals who are reading numerous books every day of the week. What if the Church could embrace technology and began a book club of Christian literature with recommended readings? These are just a few endless possibilities that when unlocked, pose a viable avenue to doing ministry in a way that reaches outward into our communities.

The G.I. Bill opened education to thousands of returning soldiers from World War II, and education was heralded as the answer to society's ills.⁶ The researcher believes that technology experienced impact due to these soldiers being trained in various arenas of academia. This is one of many ways that technology has benefited and been beneficial to humankind and our society.

Most of the information found by the researcher is clear cut to either support or disagree with technology and how it is viewed in ministry. There are several myths that churches hold as to whether or not technology is needed. There is one in particular that the researcher would like to key on that is referenced in Dr. Lynne M. Baab's book, *Reaching Out in a Networked World*. She describes a myth that many churches have gravitated towards. "We're a traditional congregation, and we have chosen not to use most of the new communication technologies. We've figured out our identity; it's the same as it's always been, so why complicate things?"⁷

⁶Ibid., 77.

⁷Lynne M. Baab, *Reaching Out in a Networked World: Expressing Your Congregation's Heart and Soul* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008), 34.

Her argument is that change is always happening. The researcher agrees with this assertion profoundly. In the researcher's context, one of the chief arguments resounds from the previous statement. The conflict in statements like this is surrounded by the fact that first graders are learning to use more and more technology every single day. "Even if all the people attending a congregation stayed the same over a decade, each of those people would have undergone personal changes in that time, and those personal changes would change the priorities and emphases of that community of faith."⁸ There is little to be debated from the viewing platform that this statement is not true. It is evident that change will occur. The researcher chooses to support the thought process that in a world that is changing, we cannot refute what is automatic. It is impossible to avoid this form of mechanized adjusting. The dilemma is that in the traditional church it is assumed that technology is attempting to go against the normal.

In the very county of Gwinnett where the researcher's ministry context resides, there are several advancements within the county school system as it relates to technology and education. The quote from an article below discloses the investment placed on technology by this school system.

Georgia **County** utilizes bond referendum funding to reward **Gwinnett** students with 21st Century Classroom **Technology** Solutions. NORCROSS, Ga. -- SOUTHERN BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS GROUP (SBCG), a premier audio visual and distance learning **technology** solution provider, and wholly-owned subsidiary of Xerox Corporation (NYSE: XRX), was recently awarded an AV bid contract to integrate **technology** in **Gwinnett County** Public Schools' (GCPS) elementary school

⁸Ibid.

Classrooms. This project is part of the school district's three-part plan to provide classroom **technology** for students and teachers.”⁹

Education is at the cutting edge in how communication is accomplished through technology. Children’s ministry should be revamped to incorporate what our kids are already accustomed to as it relates to technology. This means that funding in ministry must address the requirements of technology in our churches. In many cases the reluctance to advance is directly related to resources not being allocated in this area. Partnerships are a great way to eliminate this stigma allowing ministry to connect with community.

Incredible shifts to adjust to change are all around us. If observations are asserted findings will reveal leaders in every city opening to the realization of the importance of connecting through technology. There is a clear focus on communicating with the help of technology. Even our U.S. President Barack Obama in his presidential campaign used technology to rally the support of our country. It worked too! People rallied together to support in more ways than one, and the result was astronomical in the electing of our 44th President of the United States of America.

Leadership is very influential in how change is dealt with. The researcher considers the substratum of advancement to rest on the shoulders of leadership that is teachable. Hopefully with perseverance the researcher’s context will see her leader’s willingness through the life of this model to learn along with the congregation. In a post modern generation it is indeed paramount to have effective leadership that is committed

⁹Business Wire, “Gwinnett County Public Schools and Southern Business Communications launch largest known Classroom Technology Integration Program in the U.S.,” <http://www.highbea.com/doc/1G1-180378126.html>. (accessed August 28, 2010)

to positive growth that is communal in effort as well. Everyone benefits in this environment.

In the researcher's context bulletins are used to communicate events and happenings in an announcement format. Calling posts are also used to deliver monthly devotions and update the congregation on events. It is becoming more apparent that progression is required in an effort to get the word out more effectively. This is crucial to the growth of discipleship and evangelism. The researcher is convinced that video messaging and other forms of web technology are adequate shifts in a greater way to connect the congregants in his context.

In all actuality technology is a righteous helper and not a hindrance to an already changing world. Technology has been used to communicate the gospel on several levels over the span of many years. It is a common sense approach that suggests this common denominator in the looking ahead moment of communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The researcher views technology as a way to reach beyond the four walls of the sanctuary, and even further than the parking lot. This model will show how ministry goes into homes where people would never show up in the sanctuary pew. The researcher has set in meetings with denominational leaders who have looked at him as if he has lost his mind because of a heart to connect in new ways. The researcher sometimes wonders if he is really out of touch with reality. Pondering on the fact of whether or not difference is achievable. Is he tainted with a make believe image of ministry? Has he begun to tackle a task that needs to be ignored?

If the researcher's leadership approach to ministry and technology is wrong than God must redirect how he thinks. Ideas to connect in ways that are non conventional is at

the root of this model. The researcher believes that this model will show other ministries that committed leadership in a post modern generation can communicate an unchanging message in new ways to build relationship.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

The review of literature in this area will shed light on various models that are being used by ministry related to technology and its use in ministry. Face book, text messaging, and Skype have greatly modified the landscape of communication. In a society that moves at light speed proportions there is a constant itch to do better, and to go faster. Business mindsets are determined to optimize efficiency. The internet has been profoundly involved with these advancements. Visual communication while making international business calls as well as military communication with families, have all pointed to the efforts of increasing communication.

Face book has provided opportunities for friends who have not seen each other in years to reunite with the click of a button. Text messages have allowed conversations to propel through barriers of silence and reach through the shuffles of meeting after meeting. Pod casting has opened and exposed information at a much faster pace than word of mouth. It is easily to see that there is impact to how we communicate when we are intentional.

Websites are so common, that if companies are not utilizing one, they are immediately exposed as lacking a needed piece to showcase their identity. The opportunity to say whatever you wish in many different ways and impact so many people is considered both dangerous and necessary. The church has to take a look at whether or

not ministry can happen through this vehicle, and if it is worth it. Articles are everywhere describing terms such as digital disciples, and the ecclesiology of twitter!

For many people, the issue is fear of the unknown and the dark side of the internet. Through newspapers and television we hear of an internet filled with pornography, hate groups, computer viruses, spam, and scams. Sin abounds on the public internet just as it does in other forms of public communication.¹

The researcher believes that it is a prime opportunity to model ministry regardless of nasty possibilities. The internet could and is considered to be a nasty possibility to some, however if held in the right hands it can be a very formidable gizmo. Let's just say that we did not use technology based on the negative connotations. If we were to completely become isolated from a change agent that is causing damage, how much more damage are we really permitting?

The researcher believes that in the context of Beaver Ruin Road Baptist Church there cannot be hands off approaches to how communication happens. Major developments are happening all the time; when Church members are being affected by these changes but refuse to change how we minister, there is a problem. The question becomes, is the church becoming schizophrenic? The researcher believes that there has to be a clear definition of technology first. Once the Church is taught what a thing is, it can be embraced.

The researcher's context is a prime example of how change can occur all around you and go unnoticed. It is quite remarkable because typically as in this case the individual is actually a part of this change. It is only when this change is in the same

¹Mark M. Stephenson, *Web-Empower Your Church: Unleashing the Power of Internet Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 19.

sentence with words like ministry, and church that there is a present stigma. When the context is suggested to be included with this change, it is no longer looked at as positive.

The truth of the matter is that if it affects every other area of your life, should it not be good enough to affect the so called greatest aspect of your life. It is assumed by most that the two should not mix. The danger in this is the fact that if people are changing and embracing change everywhere else except the church, eventually the church will be filled with stagnation.

According to statistics in one article by George Barna, the church uses technology in everyday living. "People within the Christian community are just as immersed in (and dependent upon) digital technologies and social networks as are those outside of it. Both evangelical Christians and other born again Christians emerged as statistically on par with national norms when it came to each of the 15 different areas that were studied. In other words, matters of faith played a very little role in differentiating people's technological habits."²

The researcher is not shocked at these discoveries as it relates to technologies use in the household of believers in Christ. It is impracticable to flee change that affects every aspect of your life in some way. Leadership has a role in accepting these findings and addressing them in an affirmative mode.

"I have so often heard leaders say, we need to back off of this project. God must not be in it. So much opposition has arisen; it prohibits the possibility of advancement. I

²Barna Group, "Barna Technology Study: Social Networking, Online Entertainment and Church Podcasts" <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/14-media/36-barna-technology-study-social-networking-online-entertainment-and-church-podcasts> (accessed September 14, 2010).

do not find any place in Scripture where God did a great work that escaped virulent opposition.”³

The researcher believes that neither this context nor any other context can afford to continue in stagnation. “This surprise gave us our first glimpse of what might be possible through Cyber Ministry. Now, we commonly get visitors from over fifty different countries each month, and thousands of people view our sermons each week.”⁴

This is the untapped potential that the researcher believes will impact this context greatly. Community is the goal of every believer in Christ, and it is greatly possible when we embrace technology. For example instant messaging and chat forums on church websites are ways to build connections to dialogue about sermons preached, etc. Chat is one of the older forms of online community and Instant Messenger is one of the newer ones. With chat, visitors connect to an online address referred to as a *chat room*, where they *type to talk* to others. As visitors type and submit their messages, everyone currently connected to the chat room immediately sees each new message.⁵

This can be a very dynamic way to connect church members in an environment that is safe to discuss scripture and church life. The researcher affirms that there are dangers that could arise, but with supervision a lot can be accomplished through this vehicle of communication.

In an interview on how new technology and media are affecting ministry, Pastor Grunewald of Lifechurch.tv said the following, “One of the changes already taking place

³John Edmund Haggai, *The Influential Leader* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers), 198.

⁴Stephenson, *Web-Empower Your Church*, 17.

⁵*Ibid.*, 136.

is that social tools have created a culture in which people contribute and expect to have a voice. People don't just post something online and say, *Here is the information*. You post something and expect 20 people to comment on it. The church context is still by and large one-way communication, but inevitably that dynamic is going to change—or need to change—in order to address the fact that people are expecting to engage”⁶

The researcher proposes that when models of communication involving technology are developed, they increase the dimensions of shared ideas in a way that is incredibly meaningful. In a postmodern generation where everyone's opinion is respected on some levels, technology becomes an unmistakable instrument for change.

Instant messaging is a bit more personal because it is a one on one connection between two or more people who know each other's IM names. IM is more like a phone call or a conference call where the participants are specified ahead of time.⁷ This wave of connective tissue needs to remain seamless. The researcher believes that the struggle should not be to tear it apart, but to join hands and remain connected.

The way we connect is not the same way we connected in generations past. The researcher can remember Sunday dinner at a church member's house after church as a little boy. Granddaddy was done preaching for the day, and at least two parishioners would request the family over for dinner. Discussion over the Sunday sermon was typically the hot topic over a hot plate of collard greens and fried chicken.

“Now people of faith have a renewed opportunity for multiple ways to connect, but that connection is not happening at neighborhood shops like it did one hundred years

⁶Leadership Network Advance “Technology and the Church” <http://www.pursuantgroup.com/leadnet/advance/jun10s2a.htm> (accessed September 14, 2010).

⁷Stephenson, *Web-Empower Your Church*, 137.

ago. Now those connections take place in the electronic neighborhood in such settings as congregational websites, blogs, online groups, list serves, and social networking websites.⁸⁷⁷

It would be easy to argue against this change, and to demand a backward stepping process allowing what is remembered to be refreshed. This action however will not realistically occur in postmodernity at great enough strides.

Therefore the researcher suggests that we embrace this new alternative to connect which will enable communication at another level. The world that we live in will inevitably affect our context and if we refuse to modify accordingly, we are in danger of becoming disconnected altogether.

The first model of ministry using technology that the researcher will look at is the Kaleo Church in San Diego, California. Upon visiting the homepage website of this ministry it is clear that they are anxious to connect with the postmodern generation providing alternative ways to communicate. At the bottom of the screen there is a section to blog; categorized with the title Gospel Stories.⁹ This section of the website seems to be a way to share intimate moments of transformation in a powerful way with others who visit the website. One of the most interesting posts on this section is offered from an unlikely source.

"Jesus has been sooo good to me.' It won't take but a few minutes before 'Grannie' will tell you about Jesus and how good he has been to her."¹⁰ This ministry is going beyond generational barriers with technology to include the entire church with

⁸Lynne M. Baab, *Reaching Out In A Networked World* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute,) 120.

⁹The Kaleo Church, "Gospel Stories," <http://Kaleochurch.com> (accessed September 14, 2010).

¹⁰*Ibid.*

diverse ways of communicating their real life experiences. The researcher pondered on the question, how does the Church become prepared to communicate through technology in an area that is so fast paced? These quandaries allowed the researcher to discover an organization called Unconventional Method which began research in 2009.¹¹

“Unconventional Method is a strategy design and innovation firm that exists to strengthen business, nonprofit, and ministry organizations that are dedicated to changing lives.

We develop specialized solutions for our clients leveraging creative thinking, market-insight, business theory, and a unique perspective to help them achieve excellence by:

- Identifying and tapping into individual and organizational strengths, talents, and passions to stimulate and achieve excellence
- Mastering the ability to listen to, learn from, anticipate, and influence the external environment
- Scanning markets for creative ideas and untapped potential to develop new directions for companies
- Designing systems for making strategic decisions, identifying alternatives and obstacles, and determining the best route
- Leveraging the power of individuals, markets, technology, and culture to create and sustain social change”¹²

Excuses are minimized greatly as more and more opportunities to be trained and develop in areas to assist ministries with how to use technology. If the Church is willing to adjust for these opportunities, the researcher asserts that we are definitely on the verge of powerful possibility.

¹¹Church Tech Review “Churches and Christian Social Networking study” <http://www.churchtechreview.com/christian-social-network/churches-christian-social-networking-study/> (accessed September 14, 2010).

¹²Unconventional Method, “Unconventional Method mission statement” <http://www.unconventionalmethod.com/> (accessed September 14, 2010).

Linkedin and twitter can be aligned into the strategy of building community through the life of the Church as well. “Twitter is the best way to discover what’s new in your world.”¹³ Amazing enough there are models that exist to confirm that the Church has to be open to even more change to communicate in a postmodern generation.

“Nonetheless, we discovered there was a significant group of people under thirty in our city we were not reaching. In 2004 we launched *Immersion*, an on-site satellite congregation where all are welcome but the focus is on people between the ages of eighteen and thirty. This ministry includes all the components of a healthy congregation: worship, discipleship, community life, and servant ministry opportunities.”¹⁴

The researcher is attempting to show relevance to the common open minded approach that is consistent with all of the mentioned models. These rich experiences are unavailable without the philosophy of being open to try new things.

The next model of ministry the researcher will examine is The Meeting House located in Canada. The meeting house has an attendance of over 4,000 plus that spread out over multiple sites linked by live satellite teaching.¹⁵ This particular model shows an even different approach to ministry as it relates to teaching in several locations. The name of this approach is called simulcasting. “Simulcasting is to broadcast simultaneously (by radio and television).”¹⁶

¹³Twitter, “a description of twitter” <http://twitter.com/> (accessed on September 15, 2010)

¹⁴Michael Slaughter, *Unlearning Church, New edition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 2008), 122.

¹⁵Ibid., 56.

¹⁶Merriam-Webster, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/simulcasting> (accessed September 14, 2010).

The Meeting House Church connects with its visitors with immediate paradigm shifting as it relates to how we view church. “Are you tired of religion but still interested in spirituality? Are you cynical about institutional approaches to God while still being open to exploring your faith? Welcome to The Meeting House—a church for people who aren’t into church. We’d love for you to join us as we explore issues of importance in a decidedly irreligious way.”¹⁷

This fresh method to ministry is sure to intrigue the mindset of postmodern thinkers. The researcher does not necessarily agree with this Church’s stance to step away from her history by suggesting it is synonymous with words such as distrusting, and contemptuous. There can and should be an acceptance to genuine ways to connect with God through the Church with technology. The researcher does not consider it problematic to create these preambles of empowerment within the Church context as well as outside of the four walls. A mindset that grasps both-and concepts is the greatest approach in modeling the forward look through technology.

How we communicate today is drastically different from how we communicated yesterday. “Mobile phones provide scope for self-expression, through the choice of ringtone and screen wallpaper. At the same time, mobile phones’ ability to communicate with unseen, distant people using invisible radio waves is almost magical. Indeed, the notion that phones might be capable of supernatural or spiritual communication goes right back to the inventor of the telephone himself, Alexander Graham Bell.”¹⁸

¹⁷The Meeting House, “Tired of Religion,” <http://www.themeetinghouse.ca/> (accessed September 14, 2010).

¹⁸“A Spiritual Connection.” *Economist* 374, no. 8417: 12. *MasterFILE Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 14, 2010).

The conduit of communication through cellular phones has played a major role around the world. Many individuals have chosen to eliminate financial struggles through the elimination of the house phone altogether. The researcher will only agree with this article to the extent that says the communicator provides a spiritual connection and communication. The researcher cannot agree with the notion that cellphones are spiritual. This state of the art device is a tool used to enhance communication between human beings with souls. In the researcher's model, mobile phones play a key role in the communication process. This role played is at no point operating outside of preset constraints.

The next model to be discussed relates to an outreach organization called Faith Comes By Hearing. In the section below the organization shares their passions to communicate the bible through technology.

The Bible.is Bible app for iPhone, Android, and Facebook is a powerful new way to read, listen to, and share the Bible with friends and family around the world. Each application is designed to integrate listening and reading at the same time for an immersive Bible experience like none other. The applications are brought to you by *Faith Comes By Hearing*, the world's foremost Audio Bible ministry, with over 500 translations made for over 450 languages. For more than 35 years, Faith Comes By Hearing has been standing with poor and illiterate people of the world to provide them the promises of salvation, hope and comfort in the Word of God. From online technologies to solar-powered Audio Bibles, Faith Comes By Hearing continues to innovate and invite people to hear God's Word for themselves.¹⁹

The researcher believes that a combination of the several above mentioned approaches are the ideal scenarios that ministries should consider. The contribution that the researcher will be providing will address leadership's role in a postmodern context

¹⁹Bible.is, Faith Comes By Hearing, "About us," <http://bible.is/about/> (accessed on September 14, 2010).

related to social networking. There will be emphasis on multidimensional approaches to how communication happens via technology.

The researcher is looking to challenge the thinking that we should find one way of doing things and stick to it even if that includes technology. One of the dangers in improving something is to become stagnant after a forward move. The researcher will look to build a model that hinges on a framework of transformation.

“Everyone seems to want to go back to the first-century model of church in hopes that doing so will birth similar results. Most especially, members want to be like the early church mentioned in the first few chapters of Acts, the church in Jerusalem. Many long to experience what they did. The truth is there are many models of church in the book of Acts, so to classify them all as one form of the church would be naïve.”²⁰

There are several New Testament Churches that are communicating through technology in powerful ways. Dr. Bill Hybel of Willow Creek Community Church and his church are doing powerful things through technology. They have a Willow Creek News page on their website.²¹ This innovative way of communicating keeps the entire congregation connected with the happenings of the church family. Lakewood Community Church in Houston Texas has listed the pathway to salvation on their homepage with action steps to provide direction.²² With the click of a button another link will pop up with explanation to continue guiding individuals to Jesus Christ.

²⁰Neil Cole, *Church 3.0: Upgrades For The Future Of The Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 2010), 99.

²¹Willow Creek Community Church, “Willow Creek News” http://wccc.blogs.com/willow_news/ (accessed on September 15, 2010).

²²Lakewood Church “Pathway to Christ” <http://www.lakewood.cc/pages/home.aspx> (accessed on September 15, 2010).

Pastor Lance Watson at Saint Paul Baptist Church in Richmond Virginia has been intentional enough to put in place a technology team to assure ministry is at its highest potential. Pastor Watson has a welcome video that allows him to communicate the Word of God with those who visit the church website.²³ The researcher will build on this powerful way of connecting in his model and look for ways to build relationship through this project.

The researcher would agree that the gear maneuvering in ministry is not a reverse direction. The antithetical glance is to encourage newer models that will emerge. It is for this reason that the researcher can examine these models used by various ministries and strive to further the study in this area. The overall message these models convey is that technology does have a role in ministry. The researcher looks to shoulder this voice alongside these models that are already in place.

²³St. Paul Baptist Church "Pastor Lance Watson welcome video" http://www.myspbc.org/media_player.asp?type=large&messageID=13240 (accessed on September 15, 2010).

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Does Technology Have A Voice?

Developing leadership for effective programming in the post-modern generation is the focal point of delivery in this project. The researcher believes that the Church is dysfunctional in relation to gaps in communication. This monster cannot be tackled in any capacity without paradigm shifting. Our minds must be able to embrace productive change. There must also be considerable effort to maximize optimal opportunities in ways that will cause the Church to do ministry in this time of post modernity.

It is again the responsibility of the Church to advance forward with the message of Christ that is taught through scripture. It is the effort of caring about one another that strengthens the desire to seek ways of improvement. It is this caring part that is embedded in the heart of the Church that should appear again and again causing constant urgency for worthwhile change.

The church has to find ways to build relationship internally and externally that accumulates our theme of discipleship and evangelism. If we do not engage with one another in how we do ministry, the researcher believes we are cutting our legs directly from up under us.

The members of the church cannot deny how they have been affected through technology. By default there has been progression based on what has been accepted overall by a society. The unfortunate conclusion is that there has been a significant

disconnect concerning church life and secular life as it relates to technology. We have been trained to separate the two entirely, and it has put the Church in a place of stagnation.

Could it be that in this motion of division we have crippled some of the positive unity in bringing together both worlds across generations? Mark Stephenson says, “What a difference a generation makes. Today kids celebrate those who are *all thumbs* for their ability to navigate the digital media world of iPods, controllers, TiVos, remotes, PDAs, cell phones, and the web.”¹

If we are not careful, we are going to be so out of touch with the people who are in the very seats of our congregations that it will not be funny. There has to be an intentional approach to communicating to our congregations. The researcher believes that the people are used to progression in every area of their lives. To attempt to ignore the obvious is ridiculous.

Paul Tillich says, “When I came to this country in 1933 and spoke with students of theology, and criticized certain ideas of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, of the church, or of sin or salvation, it didn’t touch them very much; but when I criticized the idea of progress, they said to me, “In what then can we believe? What do you do with our real faith?”²

The researcher considers this sense of progress and faith to be the itch that can drive scripture through technology. If there are listeners driven by an unconscious

¹Mark M. Stephenson, *Web-Empower Your Church: Unleashing the Power of Internet Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 11.

²Paul Tillich, *The Spiritual Situation In Our Technical Society* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 87.

shoving to progress forward the communicator must scratch deep enough to provide relief. The researcher doubts that the church is scratching deep enough.

This is disheartening when it is assumed that we have what it takes to eliminate disparities in the life of our communities. Not only that, but everyone is a listener of something. In most cases we catch sound inadvertently. Why not be intentional with what is heard? The Church should have the most dynamic voice and that voice should echo with substantial volume what is needed in every household in America. There must be a part to be played by the Church to detail the specifics of how we communicate through technology.

The researcher believes that the church has to show the world that there is clear understanding in how to communicate in powerful ways based on an even more powerful message. The Church clearly acknowledges the need for the Word of God, and lives with the biblical precept of Psalms 119.11, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” The Church has to take advantage of the simple functions of gossip and do good! People have heard so much through the grapevine that to ignore this advantage to spread something positive is a shame. To use a faster process to spread communication through the grapevine is an even greater shame. This is why email blasting is so powerful. A distribution list of 20-30 names is simply a good beginning to a greater potential of communication.

The worst-case scenario involves connecting what is to be said with someone who does not want to hear it. The goal is not to convince at this point, it is instead to achieve exposure to what is communicated in its optimal voice. Failure and fear cannot be on the mind of the Church. The Church cannot afford to increase the generational gap because

of a lack of vigor as it relates to progress. There must be a consistent motion that is rapid enough to challenge ideas, and paced steady enough to decrease unwanted slippage.

At all times the reaching moments of ministry must be maximized with an element of worthiness. Lynn Baab says, “Tears filled my eyes as I entered into the prayer. Because of the careful use of images of the flooding, I prayed for people affected by the hurricane in a new and deep way.”³ According to Lynn Baab’s testimony, scriptures were read by a worship leader while the projector was being used. Technology through the use of a projector connected her to real life situations.

The powerful thing about her testimony is the fact that when she saw the pain of another human being it wrenched her heart. Some things you just have to see to feel a greater impact. The question becomes, is the message that we saw and/or heard worth communicating on the greatest possible level? If we are stimulated to ponder on this particular question we are then positioned to predicate timely maneuvers as a progressive minded ministry.

Biblical – Old Testament

In dealing with the researchers context and the issues that are prevalent to the life of ministry where they serve as leader there is an evident need for enhancing communication. There is so much substance from the mouth of prophets in the biblical text urging communities to dialogue in a way that is righteous. Their phenomenal insight rests in the fact that communication was initiated first by a greater source.

³Lynne M. Baab, *Reaching Out in a Networked World: Expressing Your Congregation’s Heart and Soul* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008), 149.

The Creator was considered that force that was able to communicate to all of creation. Humanity was awakened into existence based on the creative working of God. There was also an expectation in the mind of the researcher for humanity to converse with one another through the love of the Creator. However at no point was there ever an attitude that supported a lacking in clarity. God always intended to speak with clarity and power in a new way.

The researcher believes that the Church, in any context must grasp the importance in God talk. It must be realized that God communicates with us with clarity and boldness, and it is always fresh revelation. This revelation arrives through the Word of God. This type of conversation should first and foremost come from the mouthpiece of God in the representation of the Pastor of the congregation. This spiritual leader is not the only voice of representation, but should further the witness of Gods intention through communicating the gospel.

The book of Daniel is really two books in one. Chapters One–Six consist largely of didactic tales in which the title hero, Daniel, remains true to his faith under adverse circumstances. Daniel is depicted interpreting the dreams of others in these chapters.⁴

Most biblical scholars believe that Daniel was one of the last books of the Hebrew Bible to be written or edited before the canon was regarded as *closed* and the terminal date most often given for its composition and/or redaction is 164 B.C.E.⁵

⁴Stephen Harris and Robert Platzner, *The Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (The United States of America: McGraw Hill Companies, 2003), 339.

⁵*Ibid.*

There were some political agendas going on during this suspected timeframe according to most scholars. Antiochus IV is assumed to have had a formal objective to fortify a policy of forced assimilation against Palestinian Jews.⁶

This substantiates a voice that continues even in post modernity. The media is a major player in perpetuating its agendas via opportunistic mindsets. The calamity resides in a Church that would rather sit back and take a hands off approach due to an unhealthy fear of choosing to use neutral weapons to destroy obvious enemies. In the researchers cognitive vantage there has to be a more aggressive alternative than standing by idle.

Some scholars have dated chapters one through six earlier than second century and suggest that a later author built on this material for chapters seven through twelve.⁷ The language of the text actually pushes the time in an interval of the fourth or maybe fifth century. Because the first six chapters of Daniel are written in third person it is difficult to locate who the actual author is of this book. There is only one statement in chapter seven that records Daniel as writing down a dream. Other than that it is difficult to find anywhere mentioning authorship.

It is not unreasonable, then, to attribute the dreams and visions to Daniel, who passed them on in written form or otherwise, and to understand that they were finally put into their canonical form in the fourth or third century.⁸

Even though the thought of Daniel narrating to a scribe may seem a bit simplistic based on where we are currently in terms of advancement. It could be possible that this

⁶Ibid.

⁷William Lasor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 574.

⁸Ibid.

note taking possibility was a form of technology. The mere opportunity for confusion as it relates to authorship with this biblical book in the researchers opinion reaffirms the fact that God is the one who inspires true authorship of scripture. Daniels interpretation does not get in the way of what God is obviously doing.

It sounds as though it would be just the opposite. Meaning that a presence of confusion discounts the possibility of a God breathed exercise. However it must be pointed out that the researcher views the Word of God as being handled by imperfect hands in an effort by God to transmit data via the supernatural into the natural.

If it could be justified as always having been in the hand and mind of humanity void of confusion there is dire concern for source identification. The last thing to be desired is a hand and a mind that can do it all without God.

According to most scholars one of the most viable sources for Daniel derives from Canaanite folklore, and there are also archeological findings dating all the way back to the fourteenth century B.C.E., at a site in Syria that support this hypothesis describing a Canaanite folk hero and king named Daniel who is held in high regard for his profound wisdom. Some submit that Daniel is a borrowed literary type-figure who was inserted into the history of the Babylonian and Persian captivity.

The genre of literature that Daniel is writing about is categorized as apocalyptic.⁹ Apocalyptic literature comes from the Greek Apokalyptein, *to uncover, to reveal*; the genre that portrays the end of the world and of human history.¹⁰ In the Hebrew canon

⁹Ibid., 566.

¹⁰Donald McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Publishing, 1996), 15.

Daniel is included not among the Prophets, but among the Writings.¹¹ The writings are one of three sections of the Hebrew Bible. Jews refer to it as the Tanak, an acronym derived from the initial consonants of the Bible's three parts: Torah (law), Nevi'im (prophets), and Kethuvim (writings).¹²

The outline of the first six chapters is typically discussed as stories of Daniel and the historical kings of Babylon and Persia. Daniel 5:1-9 is considered to be the context of this biblical story. A clear pattern is evident in these chapters. An event takes place, and then a reaction results.¹³

There is also a purposeful message that tends to prove the promises of God to his solemn agreement with his nation. This type of word seemed to be exactly what the people needed. Daniel is a pre-modern prophet that has the revelation of God in one hand and his newspaper in the other hand. He was able to increase the contentment of Israel in their historical need. He did this by pointing to a future bound up by God.

Daniel 5:1-9 (KJV) unfolds the brilliant phenomenon of communication in its purest form. It is through the lens of its biblical author that we are allowed to capture for a moment the structure of messages from Eternity to earthly. The metaphorical language is impressive in assisting us to grasp the symbolic meaning of Gods intention as it relates to a king.

This unexpected event is a revelation of the mind of God as it relates to the actions of an individual. The researcher believes that the king could represent a wrongful mindset of the people urging the Deity to correct their way of thinking as it relates to self.

¹¹Lasor, *Old Testament Survey: The Message*, 567.

¹²Harris, *The Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 7.

¹³Lasor, *Old Testament Survey: The Message*, 572.

God is a jealous God, and the researcher's theology says that the idolatrous lifestyle and self-glorification was unacceptable to God. The researcher's context could be looked at in similar ways. Several advances have occurred in our lifestyle good and bad. We have failed to give credit and include the source of our advances, which is God.

Many of us use our telephones to call up a family member and tell them we love them but never take the time to appreciate God for this opportunity of advancement. In fact, most of the time, it is humankind that gets the thank you for progression. The researcher in no way asserts that God wants us to neglect opportunities of advancement. There should however be some recognition of a God who arranged these opportunities.

The King Belshazzar is pictured as ruler at the time of the fall of Babylon. And these verses are intact as it relates to the above-mentioned purpose of the book of Daniel. The researcher is careful to dig out what is in the text critically.

The textual critic attempts to assess the significance of changes, and when they happened, and ultimately restore the text to its original state.¹⁴ In the first few verses of chapter five it becomes very clear that there is an attitude of pride in the life of the King. This is an important insight when we examine what provoked God to communicate to King Belshazzar. It is also interesting based on the fact that the King is not of Israel. Even though it is very likely that God is bringing correction it is still astonishing that God is communicating with a Babylonian king. This proves for me that God is not limited to who God can speak to when it is necessary for God to speak.

*King Belshazzar made a great festival for a thousand of his lords,
and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.*
(Daniel 5.1, NRSV)

¹⁴David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 11.

This King who served Babylon at the time of its fall is hosting a party for these upper-class aristocrats. This verse is intentional and brief. In its brevity it is still willing to give us the setting or background of the overall picture of this passage.

Under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar commanded that they bring in the vessels of gold and silver that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.

(Daniel 5.2, NRSV)

The researcher sees a King who is using his position to abuse an occasion of celebration for his own religious beliefs. He is looking to impose his idolatrous mindset on the Jews as he sips a taste of wine. The researcher considers Belshazzar to be a drunken king taking this action. The text says that the King is under the influence of the wine. The King has an obvious agenda and he appears to be bolder with the assistance of the alcoholic beverage. The reason he did it is not as relevant to the researcher. His literal actions are extreme because of what happens in the following verses. The King and his concubines have defiled the sacred vessels by using them as if they were an ordinary drinking glass. The authorship of this text is a perfect introduction to set the stage for God to prove that there should always be reverence for God by anything earthly including a Babylonian King.

As we began to take a closer look at these verses we find the specific way in which God communicated with King Belshazzar.

So they brought in the vessels of gold and silver that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

(Daniel 5:3-4, NRSV)

These verses reach deeper to explain not only the defilement of the temple items, but it also discusses the material gods of Babylon. For the Israelites these were the vessels for holy use, and here they are being used in a profane manner. For the researcher this is perceived in the same way of someone pouring Hennessey in a communion glass at the club. The glass used for wine is symbolic for the blood of Jesus Christ, which is ultimate sacrifice.

The message communicated in their actions speaks volumes in the wrong direction. They are literally drinking from a vessel made of the same material that they worship. So they are indeed communicating a lack of reverence to El. They are promoting their material god over Israel's immaterial God.

Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and began writing on the plaster of the wall of the royal palace, next to the lamp stand. The king was watching the hand as it wrote."
(Daniel 5:5, NRSV)

It is in Daniel 5:5 that we discover the vehicle of divine communication. God shows up at the party. God was not invited by the King and his concubine. God in God's sovereignty takes action based on an important need to communicate. God chose to communicate through writing. It is this advancement of progression that is necessary for God to use to get God's point across. God uses technology in a graffiti format to talk to a King.

According to the biblical record there was a hand with fingers that wrote on a wall using the lighting from a candlestick. This distinction helps us to visualize the absence of what might be holding the hand physically. At the same time this distinction reaffirms that although we cannot see anything physically, there is an obvious ancillary mechanism greater than the absent forearm causing it to move.

It is the researcher's declaration that this source of communication is God. This verse never leads us to believe that there is something used by the hand to communicate. Daniel 5:5 simply tells us that a hand is writing on the wall. It can only be assumed that the plaster on the wall has been altered in some way to disfigure it enough to reveal something understood. We do know that plaster is made up of lime, water, and sand. In Genesis 1:6 God separated earth from sky with the firmaments. In Genesis 2:7 God created Adam from the dust of the earth. It is not farfetched to assume that God is simply reintroducing what God has already touched during creation.

The significance however is that in addition to the elements that have already been touched by God are now being altered by the hand of a human. God is choosing to communicate by using something human. Yes, God has used something human before to communicate for God. It is the partnering of God with a man's hand only that is extraordinary. If the rest of the man were intact with the hand than there would not be the awe effect.

Clarity seems to be a crucial aspect of the intentions of God based on the fact that the writing occurs in a lighted area. The Creator does not need light to visualize because for the Creator darkness is not darkness. Therefore, when the biblical author introduces the candlestick it must be assumed that it is necessary to visualize clearly what is being communicated. However, comprehension was not the end result.

Communication is only effective when what is being communicated is understood. The fact that the substance of that which was written on the wall was not understood animates the need for God to allow revelation.

*Then the king's face turned pale, and his thoughts terrified him.
His limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.*

(Daniel 5:6, NRSV)

Verse six discusses the change in the King's appearance, which is overall significant. If the King is altered after communication has been delivered, we must at least acknowledge the fact that it is recognized. If the person that is supposed to witness what is being communicated never realizes they are involved, then communication is automatically ineffective. However the king's face did change keying us in on the fact that he is realizing this form of communication.

Not only did the king's face change, but his mind shifted. Communication is supposed to share thoughts. Based on the thoughts sometimes the receiver is persuaded by the sender. In addition to his mind and his circulation system malfunctions, there was a mention in regards to his nervous system. His muscles began to frantically lock up in unexpected places, and in other points his bones began to unwind from ligaments and joints.

The amazing notion is that these reactions are all because of communication. The power of communication is being unveiled in the book of Daniel. Who could have ever thought that expression had this much power? The question becomes should we be afraid to express the Word of God and is it powerful enough to overcome the power of what expresses it?

The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the diviners; and the king said to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever can read this writing and tell me its interpretation shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold around his neck, and rank third in the kingdom."

(Daniel 5:7, NRSV)

In this particular text the King offers extravagant gifts in hopes of understanding what God is communicating. The picture in this verse shows a king screaming at the top of his lungs for a translator. The researcher asserts that there must be a realization as to if

the message and delivery scared the king, why did he want to understand his fears. The researcher believes that when communication is delivered correctly it holds you hostage until your mind can be unraveled to hold its meaning with capable understanding.

This king was clearly under the control of the message even though he was confused. There is no other logical explanation as to why he would go to such lengths to understand the message. The message had him completely bound.

Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king the interpretation.

(Daniel 5.8, NRSV)

The Bible says that the King looked everywhere and nobody was able to tell him what he needed to know. No one had the wisdom to translate what God had communicated to the King. “There must arise the suspicion that perhaps the secret basis of ordinary reason is merely some high-flown fantasticality, and that we may have misunderstood the purpose of nature in attaching reason to our will as its governor.”¹⁵

The researcher believes for Kant high-flown fantasticality is when you grab into an unknown area and act as if you know everything about it. For the researcher it’s synonymous with traveling to a new city that you have never been before and refusing to get directions. It is a bit more dangerous based on what is at stake in terms of what you are claiming to know. This high-flown fantasticality is what most people just run with. The interesting finding here is that at times it does not matter what you think you know. There is a point where reason no matter how functional it is, just does not make sense. There is at this ending point an urgent necessity for revelation.

¹⁵Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Trans., H.J. Paton (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964), 62.

The Church has always known to seek revelation. Baffling that we are moving in directions that are comfortable to us because we are afraid to operate in the unknown. Is it really safe to know everything? Is it really preferred to depend on our reason avoiding the ending point that requires revelation for the next step.

Then King Belshazzar became greatly terrified and his face turned pale, and his lords were perplexed.

(Daniel 5:9, NRSV)

The queen, when she heard the discussion of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall. The queen said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts terrify you or your face grow pale.

(Daniel 5:10, NRSV)

There is a man in your kingdom who is endowed with a spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father he was found to have enlightenment, understanding, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners.

(Daniel 5:11, NRSV)

These verses 9-11 paint the crystal clear picture of how disturbed the King was when he could not understand what he needed to understand. This helps us to see the importance of clarity. The King was just about to lose his mind when his wife spoke up. The Queen told the King that there was somebody with the ability to operate effectively with this new technology. There is a man who understands Microsoft Word per the hand of God. Linkage is occurring based on a connection between God, prophet, king, and queen. The Queen told the King not to stress out because there was someone with the ability to communicate what he saw.

Because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation."

(Daniel 5:12, NRSV)

Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king said to Daniel, "So you are Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?"

(Daniel 5. 13, NRSV)

I have heard of you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that enlightenment, understanding, and excellent wisdom are found in you.

(Daniel 5.14, NRSV)

Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and tell me its interpretation, but they were not able to give the interpretation of the matter.

(Daniel 5.15, NRV)

But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you are able to read the writing and tell me its interpretation, you shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold around your neck, and rank third in the kingdom."

(Daniel 5.16, NRSV)

In verses 12-16 the King is going into great detail to help Daniel see the total picture. He is basically saying that he knows all about what Daniel can do, and what he is prepared to do. He explains the seriousness of what he saw, and what others have been unable to reveal. He then goes to the extent of offering Daniel the same thing he offered to those who could not communicate what he saw.

Then Daniel answered in the presence of the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, or give your rewards to someone else! Nevertheless I will read the writing to the king and let him know the interpretation."

(Daniel 5:17, NRSV)

Daniel finally gets an opportunity to speak in verse 17, and he tells the King, I do not want your money. In other words, I will work for free. Daniel knew what he was about to say, but did that really influence his acceptance of the gift. I really do not know but this verse is dynamic because Daniel communicates this powerful message for free.

He is a prophetic IT representative that agrees to troubleshoot the Kings issue based on the need.

It sounds as though Daniel is operating as a non-profit representative in an effort to meet needs based on his gift. This radical view of ministry is shaping a possibility in the life of the king based on resources provided by a positional Daniel serving a God of change. This text speaks volumes to the idea that God desires human hands to work through. God also seeks to maximize how these hands operate ensuring the message is communicated correctly.

Biblical - New Testament

It is in the Gospel of John that we find the New Testament voice that supports the use of technology to communicate scripture. In John 1:1-18, KJV we find God using communication to portray and assist humanity in visualizing God through the Word. It is this Word that is characterized as the Logos. Logos is in Greek and Stoic philosophy, the universal power or mind that gave coherence to the universe. In Christian theology it refers to the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ (John 1:1), who as the creative power of God embodied truth and was God incarnate.¹⁶

The prologue of the Gospel of John is where we shall deal primarily. The prologue is a directive to the reader how the entire Gospel should be read and understood. The Gospel is wholly concerned with Jesus, so the prologue is wholly taken up with him.¹⁷ It is always necessary to gauge our viewpoint first. If at any time in the initial

¹⁶McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 164.

¹⁷George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., Vol.36 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1999), 5.

stages of communicating we are not clear on the distinct nature of what we are communicating we are in error.

The biblical author proves the seriousness in the theme of this prologue. There is no room to waver in one's mind as it relates to what the main idea is discussed to be. It is helpful to understand culture and language because this supports the viewing platform of the biblical author. Once there is a clear understanding of the womb that spawned the ideas of this author it becomes more evident who our audience might be. It is always engaging to notice whom the author had in mind when he or she were penning the biblical text into a fixed location. Whom did they see in their community that needed to breathe their thoughts? What voids did they feel convicted to seal shut?

“The remarkable feature of this presentation is that it employs categories universally known, possessing universal appeal, which would attract and have attracted alike Jews, Christians, and pagans, Hellenists and Orientals in their varied cultures, followers of ancient and modern religions, philosophers and people of more humble status who were yet seekers after God.¹⁸”

Postmodern listeners should be considered especially when we are assuming that what we are communicating is capable of sealing a void. If we neglect to consider the mind that hears what we say, and if we ignore their ability to grow and adapt to new ways of thinking we are short in how we communicate what we are convicted to share.

¹⁸Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., Vol.36 of Word Biblical Commentary, 5.

C. F. Burney maintained that retroversion of the passage into Aramaic reveals the form of a hymn consisting of eleven couplets, interspersed with comments; this hymn he saw preserved in vv 1-5, 10-11, 14, 16-17.¹⁹

Communication through music has always shown itself to be a step above the naïve. Anytime words have been given the opportunity to dance in the air with rhythm and tone they have been extremely accurate with stimulating their listener. It makes us wonder if the biblical author was intentional to use this added helper in the form of the text. Could it be that the biblical author is pulling out all the stops to attract listeners from all backgrounds. That's what music does.

Just ask the Hip-Hop generation and you will quickly find that this group of people is colorblind due to a clever harmony wrapped up in rhythm and poetry. Make no mistake about it, the Gospel of John is technology at its finest.

From the literary viewpoint it is a closely-knit composition, constructed with consummate artistry. Some scholars hold that the text is the result of an intricate process, whereby an extended chiasmus has been fashioned.²⁰ This changing around of words to give greater detail was used in a very significant way in John's gospel.

Anytime you deal with structure, it becomes fascinating to see how much attention is spent on building out of detail. As we all know there are other forms that capture the text from an exegetical perspective.

Each form has its strong points to be noticed. Is it not amazing that when dealing with the Gospel of John the biblical author chose to detail it as a hymn of poetry. It would

¹⁹Ibid., 3

²⁰Ibid., 5.

be difficult to imagine a more appropriate way of presenting in written form what the Logos is all about.

It is suggested by the researcher that the use of the Greek word Logos is a parallel with the Hebrew word *dabar* in the Old Testament. “What we have in the prologue is a coming together of notions buried deep in the cultures of East and West. The Old Testament tone sounds most powerfully in the assertions of the *action* of the Word, but the affirmations of the *nature* of the Word comport with the characteristic Greek emphasis on being.”²¹

The declaration of purpose in chapter 20, verses 30-31 has a fundamental connection with the punch line of the prologue in chapter 1, verse 14; the latter affirms the reality of the incarnation of the Logos in humanity, and chapter 20, verse 30 records the intention of establishing that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God in the sense confessed by Thomas (“my Lord and my God”).²²

It is almost as if the biblical author considered the depth of communication and all that it entailed and discovered no other way to speak about it clearly.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

(John 1.1, NRSV)

He or she decided to portray this Gospel in a way that would portray the beauty in the composition of the Word in words, which is an awesome parallel of Divine wrapped in flesh. The Word of God became flesh to communicate clearly and effectively who God is. The words in our language communicate clearly and effectively what is in the mind.

²¹Ibid., 9.

²²Ibid., 5.

God used technology. It had never been done before. No one had the ability to do it. God used technology in an eternal sense and captured what God wanted to communicate.

God then presented that which God was communicating with a visual aid called flesh and bones. This was God's digital media. This was God's cellular phone. This concept proves to the church that God welcomes productive change. There are some who would suggest that everything stays the same. This thought is based on those who affirm the fact that God is an unchanging God. I agree that God never changes. It is clear that God never changes, however God demonstrates even in this prologue of the Gospel of John that God can do a different thing as the same God.

God transitioned from using the mouths of the prophet to talk about God. God decided to be more effective in how God communicated by using an eternal technology called kenosis.

One expects to read, "In the beginning... God," but it is *the Word*; yet it would be impossible to read in its place any other title that has been appropriated for Jesus.²³

It is in Genesis that we find the opening words, *In the beginning*, and it is here in our text that we find the same words, *In the beginning*. But it relates here not to the act of creation, but to what existed when creation came into being, namely the Word, who was with God and was God.²⁴

It is clear that the biblical author is intentional to prove that the passenger and driver of communication are one of the same. It is important that we assess this view as it relates to the substance of what is being said or pointed to.

²³Ibid., 10.

²⁴Ibid.

When the bible speaks the phrase *with God*, it is obviously displaying the presence of God. This entire concept is worthy of noting based on the fact that it is a very complex declaration. The exegetical moment is centered on the concept of the Logos because of its surgical redressing of communication in this biblical timeframe. It is the Stoicism from a philosophical perspective that relates to Logos. Stoicism is a school of Greek philosophy emerging from the *porch* where philosophers taught. It was popular in the Roman Empire (Acts 17:18) and emphasized ethics, harmony with nature, the suppression of emotions, and divine law. Its vocabulary influenced some New Testament writings of Paul.²⁵

It is this quandary that supports the core of this project. The Logos is the tangent to eternity for all of humanity. The Word commentary shows a diagram that illustrates the logos as that source that gathers, orders, speaks, reckons, and thinks.

It is critical to witness the profundity of action, or the sheer force that took a space in time to breathe and live. It is a new way to do what we have already done and a fresh way for God to communicate with humanity.

“He was in the beginning with God.”
(John 1.2, NRSV)

John chapter 1, verse 2 supports the scholarly opinion that this is a repetitive glance at John chapter 1 verse 1. It details yet again time and eternity. In the Greek this name for God is first person as the Godhead and parent. As the text uses the word *He*, it is assumed to be Jesus as the Son of God in God’s presence as God. The word God connotes eternity. The word beginning indicates the start of time.

²⁵McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 270.

The meaning of the word with is expansive. It can also suggest that one thing is involved with another or that by means of one thing for another. Since the word God is in first person it is clear that this verse supports at least two in one of the Trinitarian view. There is no other viable explanation that could support the existence of *He*, with the existence of God in eternity and time simultaneously.

All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being?
(John 1.3, NRSV)

In this verse the hand of God grabbed everything that could arise and exist and coupled it with being birthed through *Him*. The *Him* is the *He* in verse two that is with God proving the importance of the *Him*. The word apart or separate helps the reader to see that if it is not attached to what is connected to eternity than it cannot be.

The verb *came into being* is *egeneto*, used consistently to describe creation in the LXX of Gen 1.²⁶ In other words, it is on the account of Christ that we are able to exist.

In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.
(John 1:4, NAS)

The biblical author uses the word life and light defining the light as the life. Life in this verse means real, or possessing vitality. The Bible says that life was in him. I believe that this was important to validate the humanity of Jesus. If God is not proven to be life through Jesus, then we have not leaped off that visible edge. If God is already affirmed as Spirit, there is no question as to whether or not God is God. The conflict is acknowledging the fact that God is more than Spirit. The leap off of the visible edge is to claim that God is not only Spirit but God is now life like everything created by Spirit including humanity.

²⁶Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*. Vol. 29 of *The Anchor Bible* (New York, NY: Doubleday Religious Publishing Group, 1966), 6.

In him was that thing that made him real. How awesome it is to talk about what is real. Words are real. Words help us to capture meaning and thoughts that are not yet breathing. Words describe and point in directions. I argue that words have the ability to live. This verse says *In Him was life*. Jesus is real, and Jesus is the Word of God. God used a Word to bring life to life, and resuscitate the dead by pouring life into them through the Word.

Light is what occurred as a result of his life. The life had to be two things. It had to be what it actually was, and it also had to be what it was not. Meaning that it had to provide for the opposite of what it was. Darkness could not provide light. Only light could provide light in darkness.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

(John 1:5, NRSV)

It is an awesome thing to communicate change to what needs changing, especially when the subject of change is unaware of the need for change. This light in verse 5 reveals itself as Christ in a darkened world created by the giver of light. Darkness does not recognize it is in the dark even when the light shows up. The reason this is a powerful metaphor leaning to explain Jesus in relation to our world is based on the fact that darkness has an opportunity to meet light even in darkness. The researcher would offer that darkness is measured by degrees of light. Therefore the light is always there. The question is can the dark recognize that the light is trying to communicate with it differently in terms of substance.

Jesus came to communicate life to a dying world on a different degree or level and in this text the researcher believes the writer is suggesting that the world could not recognize him even when he was standing in their face.

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.”
(John 1.6, NRSV)

“There is a note worthy distinction in the *was* of verse 6. This is not the *En, was*, used the Word in verses 1-2, but the *egeneto* used of creation in verses 3-4. John the Baptist is a creature.”²⁷ There came a man or there was a man is the introduction of John who is created by God with a purpose in mind. John the Baptist is profane. The sacred is the immortal world of God, and holiness is intrinsic to God.²⁸

The researcher is clear that John is not the subject being communicated, but rather John is the voice communicating the subject of life. This verse also helps us to view the process of partnering with God to deliver the Word of God. John was just a man. John was the holder of the giver of life in terms of his limited mind. John was inadequate. John however was still usable. Technology is inadequate and has unquestionable flaws. Technology, however is still able to be used.

The Bible says that John was sent by God. The creator in this verse is pictured as director or guide. This verse seems to lead us to believe that God had something to do with not only who John was, but where John is. If God is this intentional about using a profane, second party to deal with speaking about God it helps me to know that even though we are not worthy we can still speak or communicate about God.

He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.”

(John 1:7, NRSV)

John is what the bible calls a witness. We take this to mean that God designed John to talk.

²⁷Ibid., 8.

²⁸Thomas B. Dozeman, *Holiness and Ministry: A Biblical Theology of Ordination* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 13.

There was a specific subject and predicate that would come together to communicate sentence after sentence one thing in particular. This would no doubt be concerned with the Logos.

The Word of God, which was the light to those who were in darkness. John would be a major tool in convincing those who heard his teaching in believing in the light. The Logos was Savior and Messiah, and John came testifying or explaining more and more about this powerful redeemer. It was his communication that was so necessary to the advancing of the Logos.

He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.
(John 1:8, NRSV)

The biblical writer is clear to let us know that John is not the source of what he is communicating. John is a witness or one who is able to visualize the Light. Sometimes when an individual witnesses with conviction what he or she sees it sometimes confuses the focus of the hearer. Here, our writer does not allow that possibility. There is a claim that distinctly points to God at all times.

There is an intentional pointing away from John to show glimmers of expression. This was the greatest hope. Humans are not only mortal(profane), they are also diseased and violent (impure), living in a world of environmental pollution, which drives the holiness of God even further away from the profane world.²⁹

No matter how bright the reflection or the shadow of God's glory that shined off of John and his teachings, he was never the actual light or wisdom of God. John simply shared who the light was.

²⁹Dozeman, *Holiness and Ministry: A Biblical Theology of Ordination*, 86.

He simply gave them that needed glance into a new direction as a convicted communicator of the light.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

(John 1:9, NRSV)

Change, and or modification were inevitable when the light appeared. Whatever was present when the light showed up looked different after the light showed up. There was a true light that could not be denied living and breathing and talking and being talked about by a convicted witness. Heads were being turned and eyes were being opened. Technology does that too. Somehow it seems to change how we do things.

And the changeable can neither change what is change or what is unchangeable. Therefore the researcher contends that humanity is forever shifting. John the Baptist changed and yet he could not control his experience of change. Neither could he control the Light, which was unchanged.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

(John 1:10, NRSV)

The historical view of this authors point and purpose is critical. If you notice there is a constant glance backward to prove the forward move of God. Technology if it is good and profitable must always build on what is already there. It seeks to take what is and make how we operate more efficient and effective.

This verse helps us to see that *He* was here already in a different way. It exposes the power of *He* in terms of the creation of the world as we viewed earlier. The climatic shift in this verse that affirms my view on technology is in the last clause of verse 10. It says that the world did not know *Him*. The *Him* was new and unknown, however it did not mean that it never existed. Many times what we call new is only new because we

have never experienced it. Communication is not new, nor is preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The question is how we get those who have never heard to hear what has always been communicated.

He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

(John 1.11, NRSV)

It takes time to get buy in especially when you are considering a major shift. Every message that people receive is filtered through the messenger who delivers it.³⁰

This verse details how Jesus came to those who were of the same cultural background of his earthly mother Mary, and stepfather Joseph. We call him stepfather based on the anatomical makeup of Jesus, both human and divine in structure. It was this difference that was too much to accept no matter how great the similarities.

The people saw the similarities in the humanity of Jesus and could not look beyond his five fingers, and five toes. They noticed his complexion, his hair, his fingernails, everything intact. This is what they saw, and when the technology stepped forth and proved a new way operating in spirit through the flesh there was resistance.

Jesus was walking, talking in a new way that was unheard of. It was real, it was true and it was powerful enough to change lives. It brought what they knew as truth so close that you could touch it. The only problem is that nobody wanted to.

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,

(John 1:12, NRSV)

In this verse we find that there were some who did receive. This acceptance was as real as the gift offered.

³⁰John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson publishing, 1988), 146.

The word received in this verse is very profound to the researcher. Before Jesus Christ you could not grab the Word with your hand. This shows us the power of possibility, and the triumph in technology. Christ took what was always being done and made it live in a better way through the power of God.

Everyone who was persuaded to buy into this new idea was powerfully changed forever. It was an option to grab what was being offered, and once it was in your hand there was a realization that you were a part of something greater.

Who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

(John 1.13, NRSV)

This clear distinction is where the author builds on the divinity of Jesus. The paramount meaning here is to get the reader to see that Jesus is both human and divine even further to how we understand what is being built in the text.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth

(John 1:14, NRSV)

Finally we find the biblical record combining humanity and divinity in the same verse photographing the process of Kenosis. This was all for the sake of communicating in a new way. How prevailing and awe-inspiring it is to know that God would do this? The challenge we face involves our dealings with scripture being communicated through technology.

Historical Foundation

Ancient Israel is a great place to start in understanding relationship and how people interacted in their own culture and community. It is now widely accepted that the highland population of Iron Age I Palestine probably consisted of nomads, semi nomads,

semi sedentary peoples, and sedentary farmers and village residents, all types of societies that would in one way or another have been engaged in symbiotic relationships with one another.³¹

This group of people was interactive with one another in some shape or form. The researcher finds that as far back as history will allow there has been a sense of relationship when you deal with people. The significance in this finding relates to technology and its place in communities such as this throughout history.

The items produced by these technologies were probably manufactured in the context of each self-sustaining village, or perhaps in villages that specialized in the manufacture of particular items. Agricultural success in Iron Age I was facilitated by technologies that included waterproof cisterns and rock terracing.³² So then technology has definitely had a place of significance over the span of time. Relational people have always seemed to look for ways to do things better remaining connected to one another.

No matter how you view technology it is wide enough to be useful in various ways. Technology is broken down into several components. Communication technology is the most relevant mode of technology in this project focus. The main means for communication in the early 1800's were books, newspapers, and letters.³³ This way of communicating was advancement from times before it. Oral traditions around campfires in many cultures proceeded paper products with ink illustrations of words and symbols. Over the years, how we communicate has advanced tremendously.

³¹Paula McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 78.

³²*Ibid.*, 74.

³³Thomas L. Erikson, "Preparing the Way: Technological Development in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Window of Faith: Latter-day Saint Perspectives on World History* (2005): 416.

The Church has moved with this change and there is no reason to stop now. Somebody had to be the first church to complete a monthly newsletter in their community. Over time you would hear of several churches that had jumped on the bandwagon of getting the word out to reach more people for Christ. The overall goal was to place people in a position to hear the Word of God preached to change lives.

In the United States there were approximately 150 newspapers in 1800, in 1830 there were 863 newspapers, and there were more than 2,800 newspapers by 1850.³⁴ This snapshot of fleeting advancement is a noticeable shift in the mindset of people and change.

Of course this was only the beginning. The recorded changes in history are so quick and consistent that it is mind blowing. Keep in mind that this is only one element of discussed technological advancement in communication. In December 1848 President James K. Polk's message to Congress was carried by wire to St. Louis, where it appeared in print within twenty-four hours.³⁵

As major as this advancement was, it was no contest when you peek into the year 2010 and analyze Android cellular telephones. In no way do we minimize the great steps over history. These steps continue to climb in gigantic momentum. For instance, the researcher's mobile device can connect around the world at 4G speed. Capabilities to link to computers and operate as a WIFI device are just a few features that President Polk could have never imagined possible.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., 417.

These admirable shifts place into perspective the imperative nature of advancement and the Church. The researcher asserts that we are not anywhere close to a stopping point in terms of history and progression. Only death stops forward motion.

Public radio broadcasting began in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1920. The Westinghouse Company erected a powerful radio transmitter and began broadcasting over station KDKA.³⁶ Churches in 2010 are now able to host their own radio station online. This means that even a Church without a physical building can still advance the message of Christ. Sermons and music are able to be heard without a church building. This is not an effort to destroy fellowship; it is in fact an additional tool that helps us do what we were already doing even better.

After thus washing him who has been persuaded and has given his assent, we bring him to those what are called the brethren, where they are assembled, to offer prayers in common, both for ourselves and for him who has been illuminated and for all men everywhere, with all our hearts, that as we have learned the truth so we may also be counted worthy to be found good citizens and guardians of the commandments, that we may be saved with an eternal salvation.³⁷

This bringing to the brethren is what the researcher believes to be key. Often times we forget that the location of the individual only matters if it hinders our bringing moment. Over time the Church has witnessed individuals who have morphed into movable objects who don't necessarily shift towards the Church setting. Therefore we must embrace fellowship and achieve it anyway possible.

³⁶Ibid., 418.

³⁷Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1963), 66.

The first communication satellite, Telstar, developed by Bell Labs, was launched in 1962 and allowed for instantaneous wireless communication between Europe and the United States. The Church began installing satellite dishes at stake centers in the 1980s to broadcast general conference and targeted firesides and training throughout the world.³⁸

This phenomenon has continued even up until today. Of course we operate in a much greater capacity. Internet capabilities have allowed the Church to stream their services live from wherever they are into the homes of millions.

If you are not careful you will find change happening all around you as you stand motionless. The researcher's context to a certain degree is the motionless entity in need of an awakening. It is easy to get comfortable in a particular timeframe of history, which was once considered advancement or growth. In order to remain effective there must be a gauge with an operator of leadership constantly assuring forward motion.

Theological Foundation

The Incarnation is the greatest mode of communication known to this world. Back there in the darkness, God was doing some wonderful, awful, terrible, glorious things as much as to say I don't even want the angels, seraphim or archangels to see what I'm doing."³⁹

It is the researchers belief that it is possible to change and still be involved with what is unchanged. The theological backing for this process of thought is related to Karl Barth's view on Incarnation. Barth says, "God is, who God is in the act of God's

³⁸Erekson, *Preparing the Way: Technological Development*, 419.

³⁹A.W. Tozer and David E. Fessenden, *The Attributes of God.Vol.2* (Camp Hill, PA: Wingspread Publishers, 2001), 133.

revelation. God seeks and creates communion between himself and us, and so he loves us.”⁴⁰

God is the central idea promoted by Gods self. If it’s important to God to reveal God’s self to us we should be interested in connecting others via dialogue concerning God. This passion is fueled by a desire to want others to grow in relationship with God. The researcher has always witnessed an excitement to tell someone about a good experience. God allows us to see who God is, and with this viewing there should not be a simultaneous withholding from others we care about. The connection and purpose are both one piece and are forced to continue beyond the vessel that is holding them.

Barth makes another critical and profound statement concerning God and revelation. “God reveals not information but himself.”⁴¹ The researcher contends that our spiritual leaders are not intentional to interpret human experience in ways that allow people to see God’s revelation. There has to be an earthen vessel that is usable by God to partner in revelation.

This alone should provide urgency for the Church who is afraid of what technology will dilute in the process of communication. God is not information that is talked about. God is a God that is encountered, and the researcher is incapable of viewing anything with stopping power grand enough worth mention.

The Church at this point must embrace the challenge of providing fresh revelation through scripture. This means that vehicles of change can and should be used as a carrier of scripture. An aggressive approach to being in a usable position is a forthright action.

⁴⁰David F. Ford, *The Modern Theologians* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 29.

⁴¹William E. Hordern, *A Layman’s Guide to Protestant Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1995), 134.

It is believed by the researcher that anytime the Word of God is proclaimed there is opportunity for encounter. The researcher does not go as far as to say that the Church does not understand the proclaimed Word of God to be ineffective. The point to be made here is that most individuals have failed to realize that God cannot be placed in a box. Our mindset must be flexible in a way that communicates our faith in a stable way and reaches out to as many people as possible.

Christian theology and *the arts* are not two discrete entities. They can more fruitfully be seen as media by which the world is interpreted and represented; ways of perceiving and articulating memory, aspiration, community, celebration, loss, the heightened charge that natural or ordinary things can carry to the imaginatively active mind⁴².”

The researcher believes that God is in everything and in God’s sovereign omniscience there is possibility to speak to what is earthly and create whatever is in the mind of God. Therefore, technology in the mind of humanity is post creation.

This is what occurs in the Gospel of John. Mary’s wound is spoken to by a God who has a clear understanding that what God is about to do has never been done. Revelation is given to the virgin but the plan is mapped out before it is revealed to her. God is already decisive in what will happen in order for God to communicate in a new way.

When humanity is spoken to concerning holding Jesus Christ it is only in position to operate in obedience or disobedience. The researcher would like the reader to consider the vital opportunity the Church has to accept or refuse sharing the Logos in dynamic

⁴²Ford, *The Modern Theologians*, 669.

fashion. It was extremely dynamic for God to decide to communicate who God is through a human. Technology is not in conflict with humanity as it is released from the hands of humanity based on the comprehension that humanity comes out of the hand of God. So by default when God wishes to communicate a created idea God uses humanity if God wants to.

Just ask King Belshazzar what was going through his mind when he saw handwriting on the wall without an arm. Nobody instructed God that this is what God must do. God decided to pick an option that was not the most likely of choices. The amazing thing is that God made God's point. It was communicated in such graphic display that it was breathtaking in the worst sense of the word. How could something so unreal be so real? Sounds like a good dose of technology to the researcher.

Mythically speaking we attribute the creation's fall into the mix of good and evil, sin, suffering, and painful death that we know so well to a freely willed, sinful act of the first human beings.⁴³

The researcher finds it hard to believe that God makes mistakes. Humans make mistakes all the time, and if God did not intend for humans to mess up God's world God would not allow for them to have free will to act in God's world. To operate under God's will and to the best of our ability should be honorable. In discussing God's will as it relates to our lives to communicate God's will we must not mistake the opportunity of freewill. To validate what we mean we borrow from Immanuel Kant.

"When we consider will (or practical reason), we may define it as a kind of causality (a power of causal action) belonging to living beings so far as they are rational.

⁴³Burton Z. Cooper and John S. McClure, *Claiming Theology in the Pulpit* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 37.

To describe such a will as free would be to say that it can act causally without being caused to do so by something other than itself.”⁴⁴ For some this may be troublesome especially in relation to technology. Because if someone can do whatever they want to do with a self-determined rationale where is the balance? The researcher contends that there can only be one thing underneath. There may be a lot on top of, however we were created in the Creators image and likeness. Eventually the markings of creation have to appear.

Martin Luther argues, “Even if we have not measured up to what God has commanded (most clearly, though not exclusively, embodied in the Ten Commandments), we are not condemned or rejected by God. Luther argues, the law just gets in the way, rather like the law would get in the way of a couple loving and serving each other spontaneously.”⁴⁵

The revealed Logos in John’s Gospel was not only communicated to us, but it was also communicated for us. This is what builds passion and relationship. This new mode of communication was provided by a God that loves enough to talk to us in a language that we could read. God spoke our love language face to face.

“If Jesus were not fully human, he could not have identified with our human condition to assume our sin. It is necessary to insist that Christ has both a divine and a human nature, or the assurance that we have our salvation would be in doubt.”⁴⁶

Major emphasis is placed here by the researcher to assist the reader in contemplating on the fact that the stakes were high for communication to happen in this

⁴⁴Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, 41.

⁴⁵Mark Ellingsen, *Reclaiming Our Roots: An Inclusive Introduction to Church History Vol. II* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 53.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 182.

way. Humanity needed God to be human, and at the very same time God had to be God. Without this power move, humanity would be doomed. The Church must be in position to continue this emphasis through technology and her message. This is the brick and mortar of the Church's structure.

Ireneus in his defense against Gnosticism says "Man is in every respect the formation of God, and therefore he [Jesus Christ] recapitulates men into himself, the invisible becoming visible, the incomprehensible comprehensible, the one superior to suffering becoming subject to suffering, and the Word becoming man. Thus he summed up all things in himself."⁴⁷

Consequently what the researcher hears Ireneus saying relates to a great packaging job of all necessary items. In so many words this package is the metaphoric language that points towards the Logos. The Logos in Jesus Christ is so necessary, or imperative to the life of the researcher and the lives of others that it must be effectively communicated by any means necessary including technology. Technology must package effectively all of what really matters. There is so much to gain from the communicating of the Logos. There is no room to take a lazy, careless approach of pouring into the ear and heart of humanity the Word of God.

This is what we communicate. We effectively take this information that exceeds material evidence and deliver it as best we can with the help of whom we are communicating. Some would argue there is no need for technology because the power of God is stronger than anything else. The researcher would contend that yes God is all-powerful, and because we are not, the objective is not to add to God, which is impossible

⁴⁷Hugh T. Kerr, *Readings in Christian Thought*. 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 37.

anyway. Our target area is to take the entire God we do know and use everything we can to enhance our weakness as we offer the best representation of an all-formidable God.

“Twenty or thirty years ago, who could have imagined the kind of instant communication now available through blogs and email? I live several thousand miles from most of my family members, but I can communicate with them instantly through email. I can post a photo on my blog and they can see it right away.”⁴⁸

This is the type of endless possibility that can connect people in an instant across the globe. The Church could really be in a great position to communicate with other parts of the world on efforts of evangelism and discipleship. The fact that relationships are already in place in most cases builds a stronger case in how effective blogs and email could be. The researcher would like to point out that relationships are birthed all the time, and who is to say that a forwarded email to a friend of a friend of a scripture would not be powerful and relevant.

Howard Thurman says, “I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times that I have heard a sermon on the meaning of religion, of Christianity, to the man who stands with his back against the wall. It is urgent that my meaning be crystal clear.”⁴⁹

It is not as though these methods of communication are efforts to minimize God’s role. There is absolutely no way to top God’s mode of communication. At no moment should God’s revelation through scripture be sacrificed in the moment of communication. There has to be relevance and there has to be truth at all times. Maybe this is why the

⁴⁸Baab, *Reaching Out in a Networked World*, 106.

⁴⁹Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 13.

researcher pushes for an open mind in galvanizing the church of post modernity. It has to be a concept that suggests if the substance of the immaterial is worthy to be talked about the only changing should be related to the communicator and the listeners.

If in fact the church could see herself, as multiple preachers than when we communicate in our community the resounding vowels and consonants would put together an above average word called Word, and everybody is listening for connection and community. People do not care anything about how you do something until you do something that means something to them.

That is what Jesus Christ performed as the Logos. The Word was able to maneuver in Love and kindness to connect and communicate to the heart of people. The Church is to reveal scripture to the hearts of the people. Why not consider showing them we care by creating small groups that discuss biblical passages on smart-phone devices?

You might use headphones; television, cellular phones, internet, and you may even modify traditional settings or choose to shift completely into another realm. The main concern is that the message is communicated. It does not matter how communication is achieved. There will always be limitations in a limited world bound by time. If God intended for us to be hindered by self, then God would not have provided tools to improve self. Moses was not a great orator, yet because he was willing, God assisted and innovated.

Samuel Dewitt Proctor says, "Such accountability compels the preacher to honor God's truth both in the Scriptures, as well as God's truth found in logic, history, biology, mathematics, biography, poetry, drama, and in all the magic and mystery of the natural

order for Jesus promised that new truth would be given and that the Comforter would lead us to such new truths.”⁵⁰

When we are willing to communicate we are not bound by our limitations. If we are true to what we are communicating than we have already accept the fact that what we communicate is really in control and not we ourselves. Technology helps us, it does not help what we are communicating. It finds the weakest link, which is the self, and it helps the self communicate the intentions of God through Christ Jesus.

Have you ever wondered how powerful it was for God to communicate through the Word made flesh? The researcher claims the Logos to be described as technology because it involved taking something powerful and causing it to sit in something delicate prior to coming forth. How did humanity hold God’s technology? Technology has the ability to transform. God transformed humanity. God not only transformed humanity, but prior to transformation God formed humanity.

Communication was involved in both events. It was effective communication because after God formed he declared it as good in God’s eyesight. How do we capture a new spirit and vision to meet the challenges of the post-industrial city, postmodern culture, and post-party politics?⁵¹

Cornell West helps us with this question in his book *Race Matters*. God communicated because God had something to say. God did not just start moving in a particular direction because it was a nonchalant opportunity. God moved intentionally.

⁵⁰ Samuel D. Proctor, *The Certain Sound of the Trumpet: Crafting a Sermon of Authority* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1994), 9.

⁵¹ Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York, NY: Second Vintage Books Edition, 2001), 11.

Mr. West points to a few necessary areas that are worth mentioning as it relates to communicating the answer.

First, we must admit that the most valuable sources for help, hope, and power consist of ourselves and our common history. Second we must focus our attention on the public square.⁵² Communication married with technology in this limited capacity of our brain parallels God and wisdom. God as creator communicated a beginning and has continued to organize life into new dimensions at various degrees along the way. The researcher agrees with Mr. West in that this is a shared effort at hand. There has to be an agreed footing that says God is a communal God, and encourages us to be communal as well.

Existence means *standing out* of non-being. For Tillich the *non-being* out of which each of us stands is our potentiality, which, until it is realized, is simply a possibility.⁵³

This matter of possibility that Tillich proposes coordinates directly into the puzzle of technology and its usefulness related to communication. Technology is in fact possibility. Print technology created the public. Electric technology created the mass. The public consists of separate individuals walking around with separate, fixed points of views. The new technology demands that we abandon the luxury of this posture, this fragmentary outlook.⁵⁴ The researcher would assert that it is this possibility that is cradled by the non-being that when tapped into allows for creation. The interpersonal perspective is key to begin dealing with how an individual sees themselves to even be in position to

⁵²Ibid., 11.

⁵³Ford, *The Modern Theologians*, 93.

⁵⁴Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message* (Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, Inc., 2001), 69.

relate to anything else around them. When you change positions the possibility of what you see shifts.

We must also assess the question of are we worthy to communicate on behalf of God knowing what is required and what is at stake. If this much possibility is available, then is it also associated with danger? In an interview with Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, and Dr. Cleophus J. Larue on preaching with power the following question was posed. “Did a sense of unworthiness ever come over you in your preaching or preparation for preaching? Dr. Taylor says, “I lived with that. That’s why I keep saying the preacher has to get a sense, without too much self-importance, that he is an ambassador from another kingdom.”⁵⁵

As a communicator of God thought, there must be an understanding that God has had something to do with sending who it is that communicates. The method in which it is delivered or communicated may be changed or enhanced but God is the revealer. God is the substance and provides the material of what is communicated. God chooses representatives to unveil the presentation of God’s intentions for humanity. At no point is the vessel being used by God in control of God. At no point is the communicator completely in control of what is being communicated. Regardless of how much control appears to be in the hands and heart of the communicator, the Word is always greater.

Karl Barth believed this. The Church can speak about God because God is the particular God that God is.⁵⁶ Communication happens because God is the subject matter of discussion. In our own level of reason we are able to express the findings based on

⁵⁵Cleophus James Larue, *Power in the Pulpit* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 155.

⁵⁶Ford, *The Modern Theologians*, 29.

revelation without explanation. The goal is to observe this particular God reveal God's self.

Prathia L. Hall says, "Sometimes I preach a sermon and think I am finished with it, but the sermon is not finished with me. It is as if the text is saying, 'I am not through with you yet.'"⁵⁷

Homiletically, Dr. Mark Lomax, and Dr. Carolyn Ann Knight tutored the researcher and pointed him in a direction that painted a legitimate breathtaking account of what is to be communicated according to the biblical text. Dr. Lomax would question constantly in the classrooms of Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta. He would ask, "What did the air smell like in Egypt?", or "What sound did baby Moses make in that river?"

Dr. Knight urged that preaching was an intimate act. She says, "By intimate I mean that in the preparation, the preacher has a moment or period of time with God and the Holy Spirit that will result in the Word from God that a particular people in a specific place at an exact time need to hear. Preaching is an act of intimacy, a delicate moment between God and preacher, preacher and people."⁵⁸

There is never a break in relationship. God is involved throughout the process. When the mind receives revelation there is earnestness that is willed by God. In this period God allows for choice. It is in this choosing part that the individual must give it all you got. This is where you maximize your choice to deliver the message.

⁵⁷Larue, *Power in the Pulpit*, 59.

⁵⁸Ibid., 89.

If scripture is important enough to be communicated, then and only then should that person reach for excellence to make God proud. If technology can assist how scripture is said and discussed it has validated its place of importance in a very teachable moment. The researcher believes that scripture is important enough to be communicated. People are hurting and in need of empowering.

Larry Graham says, “For the pastoral caretaker, symptomatic crises are an invitation to be a participant in changing the fundamental fabric of personal and social reality, and to reconstruct the environment.”⁵⁹

Cold and impersonal have been word selections to describe technology. The researcher would argue that to identify technology as anything other than possibility is a major theological error. The operator of technology is the target of reflection. So then if cold and impersonal behavior is what comes forth it is only based on the user of whatever form of technology is chosen to be used.

Ernst Troeltsch held the view that revelation is not simple, one-sided effect of God’s activity on man’s soul. It is a reciprocal process. “The human and the divine, “he declared, “Co-exist in a complex mutual interpretation.”⁶⁰

‘Therefore, humanity has a part to play. The assessment must include humanity. In this interpretation it is pivotal to mention the suggested order of events according to David Buttrick, “God acts in history, God’s history is recorded for us in scripture,

⁵⁹Larry Kent Graham, *Care of Persons, Care of Worlds* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 96.

⁶⁰Rufus M. Jones, *The Testimony of the Soul* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1936) , 118.

preaching transfers scriptures' testimony to the faith of the church. In salvation history, preaching is a witness to the witness to the mighty acts of God."⁶¹

The application of tools in communication is readily available in post modernity. The mind of humanity has been gifted to advance in so many ways. At the high speeds of electric communication, purely visual means of apprehending the world are no longer possible; they are just too slow to be relevant or effective.⁶² It should not be considered risky to expect the user of tools and methods in the enhancing moment to modify or create change. If God trusts humans to think up technology why can't we trust one another? The researcher would offer that this is a stingy voice of oppression, and narcissism. No risk is greater than holding on to what does not belong to you. The challenge for us is uncontrolled witness in a state of being involved with the Divine and possibility.

Howard Thurman says, "But that to which he is committed must be of such importance and of such supreme worth to him that in exchange for this sharing, his life; his physical existence is of no consequence."⁶³ A true communicator is totally connected to the message. Technology and nothing else can control him or her. It can only grow what God has buried in their Spirit. As a matter of fact these communicators are tenacious and fiery. There is a burning to fulfill by any means necessary. They do not want to be in control. They simply want to communicate. To deal with the human predicament is their drive and determination. When communication is postured as the predicament they seek to conquer it through faithfulness and obedience.

⁶¹David Buttrick, *Homiletic Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 114.

⁶²McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage*, 63.

⁶³Howard Thurman, *The Creative Encounter* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1972), 78.

The researcher believes theologically that this wrestle with communication is based on Soren Kierkegaard's view of despair. Kierkegaard calls despair the sickness unto death. Kierkegaard also calls despair the entry hall to faith. He means that the first step toward faith in the redemptive power of God presupposes the self's loss of faith in its own resources to affirm and sustain itself in the face of death, suffering, the unknown, guilt, and sin.⁶⁴

Without a viable way to communicate a believable treasure, there is an automatic frown and fright that is irremovable. That face is horrible. Because the mind is sick unto death with the frustration of not being able to get out what is within. Why victimize the self by refusing to use all means to get out what is within, or at least speak to it?

It is a righteous intention to share what will change the nations per God. It is also righteous to know that you were changed by God. A Christian communicator is not just any communicator. There is a fascinating passion in their eye. Jesus Christ put it there. Not only can you not afford to overlook the benefits of technology, but when you are a Christian communicator you cannot bear the thought of possibly missing the greatest opportunity of all time. To be afforded the opportunity to build an effective way of communicating using technology is a gem. We are given one life to live via the Creator.

The church of the third millennium finds itself in the midst of a culture that has become nothing but a meeting place for individual wills, each with its own set of attitudes and preferences and who understand that world solely as an arena for the achievement of

⁶⁴Cooper, *Claiming Theology in the Pulpit*, 12.

their own satisfaction, who interpret reality as a series of opportunities for their enjoyment and for whom the last enemy is boredom.”⁶⁵

Communication using technology has the potential to be out of order in a church that is consumed with individual wills; unless God is figured to be sovereign. In that case the possibility of chaos is minimized based on an unlimited and all-powerful God. Communication is powerful. Communication can create, and kill. Communication is not the ultimate creator.

If God wants to stop what communication has created God is more than capable. God can birth without communication as well. God has healed many without talking to anyone outside of God’s self. God has restored, and God has changed positions without moving outside the thoughts of God. Therefore as communicators in this postmodern generation everything we do is additional and allowed by God to enhance what God has commanded and willed to occur.

We can never operate before or outside of God without the permission of God. Even a false communicator or prophet so to speak has not opened their mouth without the allowance of God. It is amazing that God would allow a lie to exist. However neither lie or truth can exist unless God has permitted. We exist based on the mind of God willing us to be. The researcher has heard countless times to be careful what you say because words can be dangerous. Would God allow a careless mouth to throw danger without regard? Could technology be used to harm instead of help with God’s knowledge? Again, nothing can happen with God ultimately permitting it to be so in the mind of the researcher.

The difficulty is grasping God’s purpose behind something drastic occurring in

⁶⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2d ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 25.

life. The question for the researcher is what is greater, man's intentions or God's purpose. Some responsibility falls on the listener. It should not be the case that there is never a capable ear in listening distance to discern the difference of foolishness from wisdom.

God should have already spoken before we speak. God should already be heard before we hear. Technology does not enhance what God said. Technology helps us to repeat what God told us in a better way on a second time. Some would argue that God's words cannot be enhanced. God's words cannot be enhanced, and if our minds were not human in structure than maybe what God said could be held perfect. Our minds however are imperfect so even a clear picture of what God said can be heightened with other tools.

The tool does not replace God. The tool is for use after God is realized to be with us. Paul Tillich writes, "Estranged from the power of being, we are in fact unable to hold individualization and participation, dynamics and form, destiny and freedom in balance in our transactions with our world. As a result, our transactions or relations with others break down and our "world" becomes progressively chaotic."⁶⁶

We need to communicate. We need to communicate with others, God and self. It is only unhealthy when we fail to communicate. It is only chaotic when we fail to relate with others. Many believe that technology is chaos and not relational. However anything that eliminates estrangement is in the researchers mind to be described as harmony. There are friends who have not seen each other in years that have reconnected via social networking.

Social networking via technology does not forcibly point two individuals in opposite directions. It is an opportunity if it is to be described as anything. A picture

⁶⁶Ford, *The Modern Theologians*, 93.

inclusive of God and conversation as two major components has a predetermined destination by default.

Without God communication is excruciating chatter jam packed with static and clamor. Only God can cause what we say or do to make sense. The voice and its tone do not minimize Gods ability. God is strong enough to whisper and still create effective dialogue. As a matter of fact even without any added support there is confusion in communication. Yet God still talks! The mind will always misunderstand and convolute. Risk taking is balanced approach when you place things in the righteous perspective.

God is concerned with cultural differences. God created the varying degrees of personality, and culture. God is interested in righteous communication among these differences. If righteous people communicate using technology is that not righteous communication.

It may be liberating to walk closer and further than we have ever walked before based on a vehicle that allows touch when we never actually touch. The box of a closed mind is open and life is free to move around when we can be flexible in how we reach outward to one another.

If God is all powerful then it would make sense that if God has spoke a word than that word is powerful. This powerful word is communicated throughout humanity by humanity partnered with God for the purpose of God. God cannot be bound by language barriers or any other barrier for that matter. Yes there will be confusion, but there is only a matter of time until the confusion is tapped on the shoulder by clarity. This confusion is on the earthly end versus the eternal end.

The researcher was speaking with a grandfather of a hospital patient some time ago. The grandfather began to describe a scenario in which a friend of his with a Swedish heritage flew to Sweden for the first time as an adult. Growing up in the United States, he had never been afforded the opportunity to go to his native context.

He spoke the Swedish language very well. To his surprise, the natives told him he spoke funny. What he found is that although he spoke the Swedish language, it was based on the teachings of his great grandfather. So there was still a gap in how to communicate commonly. These mistakes will happen, and they are out of our control.

There is no way to eliminate mistakes from the life of the communicator. There will be errors that occur however we choose to communicate. The interesting conclusion relates to the fact that the message of Christ has not lost its authenticated worth based on imperfect humanity.

In a key comment, Ricoeur asserts: “hermeneutics seem to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience.”⁶⁷

God looks beyond the outward separation amongst humanity, and seeks to find somebody with this on their insides. God finds this type of a creation and says speak, and with everything you have and then some. The researcher’s context is a potential for this inside move. Sometimes it just takes fresh innovative looks to stir stagnation. The Church must be in position to transform self and community.

⁶⁷Ibid., 532.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The model for communicating scripture through technology was spawned out of a two faceted crisis. The first crisis was related to the lack of willingness to embrace change involving the use of technology. The second crisis was based on a lack of relationship and sense of community. Prior to the start of this research technology played a very minimal role in the ministry context. The researcher contends that the mindset of the people within the context lacked stability in leadership. The researcher suggests that this instability played a major role in the reluctance for ideas to emerge. In order to position the church for paradigm shifting, the researcher had to ensure community through a model that would prove none threatening.

The research methodologies for this model were pre and post questionnaires, interviews, and journals kept by the researcher and the subjects. This provided the necessary methodologies to triangulate the researcher's data. The researcher approached this project with a hypothesis that there would be increased communication of scripture based on the use of technology. Through this network there would also be relationship building.

There were 10 subjects used in this project. There were five men and five women chosen to participate in this model. The reason this number of men and women were chosen was to provide some diversity of opinion. The demographic of these 10 subjects were African American, and Caucasian as reflected in the context of ministry. Based on

the contextual demographic of Beaver Ruin Road Baptist Church it was necessary to get a good representation of the congregation based on race. The 10 subjects were given a 12-question questionnaire via email.

The questionnaire was initialed on the bottom right corner pre and post to provide correct data. The questions were related to technology and the Bible. The researcher wanted to find out the viewpoints on these two areas as it related to daily living. It was important to gather the data related to their use of technology apart from the Bible altogether. It was equally concerning to find out the viewed ideas of the relationship of technology and the Bible. The questionnaires provided qualitative data to assist in this area. The researcher discovered that there was a gargantuan gap between technology and the Bible. The use of technology had a place; it just did not seem to be related to how the Bible is communicated in the lives of those who took the survey. The researcher would be anxious to see if this model could prove otherwise.

Interviews were conducted over the telephone. There were two telephone interviews. The first telephone interview was with a Pastor of a local congregation who is very progressive in using technology in the life of their ministry. This person was chosen so that the researcher could hear some of the necessary things involved with paradigm shifting as it relates to ministry. The second telephone interview was with a layperson who is involved with a nationally known non-profit organization and believes that technology is a great asset to communication. This person was preferred so that there could be some insight interconnecting how a layperson might stimulate change.

The interviews were able to give a level of experience to the project from those who have been involved with technology and church from two different extremes. This

approach was necessary and proved to be valuable to the researcher. It allowed the researcher to hear at the very least how the Pastor and the layperson view technology as it relates to ministry.

The project lasted over a six-week period. Each week on Sunday night the subjects were emailed on the computer and/or text messaged on a blackberry cellular phone a scripture of the week. YouTube video clips were also emailed to the subjects via the computer. Each day starting on Monday morning the researcher would post a question or statement reflecting the scripture sent out on the computer through Facebook, which is a social networking device.

The researcher chose to send the scriptures out on Monday morning to provide a fresh start for the week. The statements or questions were posted on a computer through Facebook. Each post made was automatically sent to the researcher's blackberry device immediately. Dialogue was instant throughout the entire project 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The researcher had intentions to be in constant contact with those who responded so that they would not feel as if their comments were not being addressed in a timely manner. The crisis of relationship building was impacted in an optimistic pathway based on this approach.

Journaling provided the researcher with an intimate understanding of how the subjects were reacting while going through the project. They were able to communicate some of their experiences with technology even as they journal. The researcher received typed documents that were turned in showing that technology was not limited to just one structure. It also showed a level of commitment to the project to take additional time out to spend writing their thoughts and emotions.

The questionnaires granted an inside look from a beginning perspective and also an after shot from the end. One of the things the researcher found to be helpful was determining where the subjects were mentally coming into the project. The questionnaires were a brilliant way to collect information related to where the starting point would be. The researcher believes that the methods used were very helpful in completing the project. The model was well documented for step by step guidelines in future work.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Beaver Ruin Road Baptist Church began to communicate scripture through technology in the Spring of 2010. The project focused on building relationship through communication. The scripture was the foundation of what was being communicated in order to initiate a solid connection. The researcher and a strategic planning team sat down and discussed an approach that would allow the model to be birthed. This team was called the Dream Team and came from different educational backgrounds. It is composed of the researcher and members of the congregation. The first step in the planning phase was to sit down with individuals and explain the process to them in order to assure commitment.

Once each person expressed a commitment to participate in the process they were contacted a few weeks later, prior to the beginning of the project to reassure commitment

The researcher also established a social networking profile for the ministry context on Facebook in order to provide a venue to dialogue. There were only two individuals who did not have Facebook accounts and these individuals were assisted in setting up an account and profile. All individuals were already familiar with emails and had accounts in place.

The next component of the model involved the selection of scriptures. The researcher formulated scriptures for each week of the six week project to assure that there

would be prepared scriptures for discussion. The scriptures were chosen based on length, familiarity, and variety. The reason these areas were the criteria was to engage the individuals in this process as much as possible. The final component of the model involved the vehicles of communicating technology. The researcher used a computer and a blackberry in order to communicate with the individuals through technology.

The researcher would now like to share what happened at the point of implementation. Each individual completed a 12 question Questionnaire that dealt with their frequency of reading the Bible and discussing what they read. It focused on how they viewed the importance of scripture as well as how they developed a deeper understanding of scripture. To better understand how they would function in the project using technology the researcher asked questions that dealt with computer experience.

The individuals were asked to reflect on their personal computer use, and if they had ever considered combining scriptures with technology. In the pre questionnaire 20 percent said they read their Bible daily with another 20 percent who read it monthly. There was an astounding 20 percent stating they have not picked up or heard their Bible read the entire year outside of a Sunday morning worship experience. There was a 40 percent response who claimed to read on a weekly basis.

From the researchers point of view these findings show the lack of importance in daily reading of the Bible. People in general are not motivated in the researcher's context to establish daily discipline on their own to at least read their Bible on a more consistent basis. This leads to a disconnect in the ministry context.

The second question dealt with dialoguing with the content of the Bible. These numbers suggested that 60 percent of those who read their Bible never talk about it. This is a very discouraging number.

This number suggests that discipleship growth is poor in the researchers' context. Ten percent suggested that they discuss their Bible monthly, and only 30 percent stated that they discuss the Bible on a weekly basis. It could also be assumed that this weekly percentage is this high based on weekly conversation of Sunday morning messages. People are not connecting to discuss and grow spiritually related to the scriptures in this ministry context.

Question three introduced technology as an option in reading the Bible. Twenty-Five percent said they used technology to read the Bible, and 25 percent said they did not, with 50 percent saying that they used it sometimes. It looked as though technology really does not matter based on these numbers. If it was accessible to them they would use it, and if it was not it was not of chief importance.

Surprisingly in question four 80 percent responded by saying it is very important to read their Bible. In other words they would not argue the importance of reading their Bible, however they were not intentional in prioritizing it as a major concern. The researcher was curious to see if the implementation of technology would shift the mindset of prioritization.

Question five was influential in finding out if there was any intention involved in studying the Bible. Yet again, 70 percent stated that they do not take notes when they do read their Bible. Only 10 percent stated definitely that they do take notes when reading their Bible. The researcher would offer that the level of what is learned when engaging

with the Bible is drastically diminished when we refuse to write things down for later reflection.

Question six dealt with trying to build structure. Forty percent said this would be very helpful, and forty percent said it would not make a difference. The researcher is finding that in this context there seems to be an indifference to structure and time management. This may not be a bad thing in the long run. It may be that there should be a leniency toward remaining flexible in how we approach ministry.

One hundred percent responded by saying they have used a computer at Beaver Ruin Road Baptist. This question helped the researcher understand the basic level of functional ability. Everyone seemed to have a good understanding of how to operate a standard PC computer. At least 60 percent have looked at scriptures on a computer, and less than 50 percent had actually discussed scripture on a computer with other people. General information was also gathered in two of the twelve questions related to race and gender.

It really at this point did not seem to the researcher that much thought had been put into connecting with others in an effort to build relationship, which is a message that permeates the biblical message of Jesus Christ. Results did reveal that 80 percent felt they would be empowered to read their Bible more if they could discuss what they read on their computer with others. This alone should encourage anyone serious about growing spiritually to consider other options and methods to exploring their Bible.

Each subject kept a journal of their thoughts and experiences throughout the six-week period. The researcher also kept a journal throughout the six-week project. The

researcher found that in week two the overall excitement for involvement with the project was phenomenal. The entries were more frequent, and increased in number.

The subjects began opening up with what they felt about the scriptures that were discussed week by week. It was around week four that the researcher really begin to notice significant results. The dialogue was non-stop through about 3:00 AM.

There was back and forth conversation in a relational tone that discussed Proverb 31:10-31. There was no instance where anyone took on a confrontational or close-minded approach in this six week project. Everyone seemed to either agree, or agree to disagree in a polite manner. There were times in the project when participation was not as great. Some days in Week One and Two there were individuals who did not post anything on Facebook at all. In these timeframes the researcher was helpless to the point of observation only. Technology was in place and it was up to the individuals to take advantage of the opportunity.

At the same time, there were other days where these same subjects would post three or four responses on Facebook back to back. The researcher makes an incredible assumption that added technology may not necessarily influence the behavior of the individual to participate. It simply adds another option that is at the mercy of the individual and his or her intention. For purposes of confidentiality the researcher will share a few of these entries with an alias to serve as their identity.

Sharon entered an initial entry stating the following.

It seems like a good way to get me back in the word. It was quite a reality check when I read my answers to the researcher's questions about my Bible reading habits. I could do way better! I am also excited about being in a diverse group. Too often I am in dialogue with people who look like me, live where I live or work where I work only. So it will be good to discuss things from different

backgrounds and cultures. I see that our verse this week is Romans 2:9-19. I am going to read it first (in my NIV) and see what it says to me before I see what is going on with the group on FB.

The researcher did not expect to see such honesty as it related to reading the Word of God on a more frequent basis. It was very refreshing and helpful to get a true reflection of where the individuals were in this project at Beaver Ruin Road Baptist. The researcher noticed that technology seemed to be creating a comfort level for communication to take place that probably would not occur on the front pew of an 11:00 AM service in the ministry context.

In an effort to help the reader observe the flow of the dialogue the researcher has included Week One through Week Six scriptures with posted feedback on Facebook. Week Two is used as a detailed snapshot of the dialogue between some of the individuals on Facebook.

Week One: Romans 2:9-19

✦ Maria stated,

I have to be honest and say that I was truly convicted after reading these particular verses. While yes I can say easily that I'm always a hearer of the Word, I can't honestly say that I'm always a doer.

The researcher's journal entry in Week One shared how we all must keep a humble approach to how we view self. At times, we all have not operated according to what the Word challenges us to do, and these times of reflection can actually be healthy and provide spiritual growth opportunities.

Week Two: Mark 7:8-9, 13 (Facebook Dialogue)

Entry One –My instant thought: there's a big difference between a good idea and a God idea.

Entry Two –I agree with entry One all the way. This is great being able to talk with others about God’s word.

Entry Three–Just keeping it real, nobody wants to hear it when it’s obvious you are wrong. This Word is convicting.

Entry Four–Oh what a tangled web I’ve weaved so many times in my life by “setting aside” his commands. It was during those times that not only did I think, but I practically convinced myself that what I was doing was the way it should be done. I was so called running my own program.

The researcher would also like to share journal entries from week

Two. Shaun stated,

This week I was a little late checking on the site for my Bible verse. I had a lot going on last week and this week my desire to read and study anything was pretty much gone. But I have this great on-line group to keep me on track!

The researcher noticed that the dialogue involved the overall life of the individuals. It was not just conversation about the biblical verse. The whole person showed up to these discussions unlike some Sunday mornings. The game faces of Christianity were pulled off in this environment and people were willing to share their ups and downs throughout the week even as they engaged in discussing the Bible.

Sharon wrote,

This week I tried things in a different order. I read what people wrote about the passage first. I really enjoyed what Lisa wrote and that her mind was already heading in that direction before she even read the passage. This week John and I are going to observe our New Year’s resolution (visiting one church a month) and visit the Episcopal Church - which is known to have a lot of rules, customs and traditions, LOL! So in light of this scripture I might be visiting the church with a different point of view.

The researcher is observing that based on the individual testimony of this person that there is influence through communicating scripture through technology. People are impacted by talking with others about the Bible in a way that carries over into their lives

and decisions being made. The researcher is sure that other influences are also present that assist in the decision making process.

Tony wrote,

I like how the scripture we are studying for this week is not typed out on the FB page. Getting a text message with it not being written out was pretty cool. It gets me to pick up my Bible and read it. Also I enjoy reading what goes on a few verses before and after what we are discussing.

The researcher wanted to introduce other vehicles of technology at this point in the project. The decision to send out a text message was an attempt to give another angle to how we communicate. This also added another level of communication. In addition to what was already in place, the researcher begins getting text messages in response to the scripture sent out. The challenge in this was that the researcher had to send out multiple group messages to ensure that communication was not isolated between himself and only one individual.

Week Three: Luke 5:1-11

Mario stated,

This passage speaks volumes and is one that often puts things back in perspective for me when it comes to faith, obedience and my call of duty in this walk. Verse 5 does a great job of reminding me of the strong measure of faith I am to possess. Regardless of the situation, circumstance or what I have already seen, God still has the final say, so therefore I am to trust Him for guidance and be obedient to His commands. Verse 4 speaks to me about my call of duty as a Christian and the task God has charged me with of bringing others to Christ.

Week Four: Proverbs 31:10-31.

John said,

You can get a lot of wisdom and even a laugh or two out of these one-liners. My personal favorite is Proverbs 25.24. Jamie stated “Now this is what I’m talking about! I like the perspective offered earlier that shows the strength of relationship” Mark said this, “The virtuous woman is a force to be reckoned with, and most men these days deactivate when they couple with this God given gift. I think it is a trick of the enemy to be honest. If God put power together, it is put together for a purpose.

The researcher guided the conversation along in a way that encouraged the posted information. There was not a stringent method of correction in relation to interpretation. The researcher did assure that for the most part the insight offered was solid and credible. Nobody really offered completely arbitrary understanding of the scripture. The researcher did realize that the level of spiritual maturity could possibly play a role in the level of communication.

Week 5: Isaiah 53 (Video Clip)

Carrie wrote,

I watched the video clip this week. I normally avoid any movies that portray things in the Bible as I worry about if the subject matter is being portrayed accurately in a way that would please God and also in a way that treats the scripture with respect. But the clip was well done and seemed true to the Bible. I read the scripture and was amazed at how clear a vision Isaiah had of what Jesus was to mean to the world and what would become of him. It was also humbling to think of how Jesus would go through all of this for me. For everyone really!

Tamara wrote,

For me this clip showed the magnitude of God’s effort to save us and free us from the curse of sin and brings to fruition the promise of Gods salvation.

Week 6: John 10:18 (Video Clip)

Marcus wrote,

It's a painful and at times overwhelming reminder of how much my forgiveness cost and how much God values me. It takes me back to a part in one of my favorite songs. *They hung Him high, they stretched Him wide, He hung His head and for me He died, now that's Love!* All I can say is Thank you God for loving that much!

Jerry wrote,

I watched the video clip and read the scripture. I was moved to tears by this clip. I am so grateful that this was done for me. I felt so bad for his followers who were with him and tried to help in the last hours. It made me think about what it means to be a true friend. I am looking forward to spending resurrection Sunday with my family.

Weeks Five and Six were used to introduce another vehicle of communication.

This vehicle of communication was visual technology. The researcher chose two YouTube clips from the movie *The Passion of the Christ*. These clips allowed the model to prove yet another way to communicate scripture through technology. It also allowed those who were visual learners to appreciate what fits them best in terms of learning style.

The researcher discovered that at the end of the six weeks the individuals involved in the process were eager to continue the journey. The Post Questionnaire revealed the following. In terms of how often you read your Bible, the results changed from 40 percent weekly to 80 percent weekly. The researcher suggests that these findings doubled showing that communicating scripture through technology for six weeks influenced the frequency of reading the Bible.

“Online community offers another significant advantage in the midst of a fast-paced life.”¹ The researcher believes that this advantage of online community provides substantial opportunity to influence how we communicate as a religious community. We really do not communicate as much as we should about the Bible. Anything that assists us in our microwave minded society is a major plus.

In terms of whether or not you discuss what you have read in your Bible, there was of course an automatic difference in the responses. In the Pre-Questionnaire the response was 60 percent have never discussed what they read in the Bible, versus a Post-Questionnaire response of 80 percent who discuss it daily. The Pre-Questionnaire response had no daily discussion of the Bible. Thirty percent said they discussed the Bible weekly, and 20 percent of the Post-Questionnaire response said they read their Bible weekly.

The researcher must admit that one of the things found in regard to this statistic is that it did not just happen. There are several factors that influenced the modification. One noticeable influence was the intentionality throughout this project. There were daily posts on the social network profile that would send updates to everyone connected to the project. Every time someone posted a response on Facebook, blackberry mobile devices were prompted. At any time during the day if someone asked a question there was a notification sent automatically via email to all recipients.

The researcher received numerous notifications. The level of communication at certain times was almost overwhelming. The researcher will caution that consideration be placed on a heightened expectation of conversation with participants. The researcher is

¹Baab, *Reaching Out in a Networked World*, 111.

excited at these overwhelming moments, but it is worth stating that this is not something to be taken lightly. All responses count and matter and must be addressed accordingly. Individuals seemed to have questions that they began to share that have been locked up for undetermined periods of time. Hearts began to open and people began to connect and trust in each other to say what they really felt.

These have potential to become very serious moments and the relationships have to be maintained in a way that promotes growth. The researcher was honored to share in these moments with members in the researcher's context. It was powerful to build greater connections through online community.

These connections began to influence a desire for greater connections. One person said this,

I would really like to get involved in some sort of community outreach. I say this because my mother, who is one of the Godliest people I know, really reaches out to people in need. She reached out to battered women, alcoholics, and a foreigner from another continent. She touched the lives of troubled teens, an ex-convict and the mentally ill. All of these people have been in our home, or in our family car, or at our thanksgiving dinner or even called our house.

The researcher discovered that connection is possible on online communities. People want to communicate and feel as though they matter. The church setting does not always provide these opportunities. If we were to create opportunity for safe dialogue related to our views on the Bible, it could be very powerful.

The Bible abounds with invitations to return to God. If you think God does not desire you to return, you have never understood the Book.² The researcher finds this returning very likely through the use of technology as we communicate scripture.

²Joel C. Gregory, *Come Home Again: Starting Over With God* (Fort Worth, TX: Hupomone Press, 2007), 71.

Anytime you heighten conscious the operation level of the mind is elevated. Beaver Ruin Road Baptist seems to be embracing technology more readily in these findings. Open up your mind and you broaden your scope dramatically. If the message being communicated is unchanged and the scope has been focused to precision there is a grand outcome on the horizon. Jamie wrote,

I read my Bible at least twice a week, and I discuss my Bible four to five times a week.

This statement did not exist prior to the project.

Tory wrote,

Being a part of this focus group gave me the opportunity to discuss what I have read and it was interesting to see how others interpreted the same scripture. It is very important for me to spend time reading my Bible.

The researcher is ecstatic at the findings. Typically technology is viewed as an isolator, separator and or divider. These projects findings are pointing in a different direction.

Question six asked, "Is it helpful for you to have a set time for spending time reading your Bible?"

Jennifer responded,

Yes. It would be helpful to set a time but the problem is keeping the set time. So I found that other ways to keep the Word in front of me is just as beneficial. For example by having it on Facebook discussions, my iPod, and receiving inspirational text messages are making it easier for me personally to make sure I spend time with God every day. It does not replace reading my Bible but it is just reminders so to speak to acknowledge God as much as possible throughout my hectic days.

The researcher believes that these findings were eye opening. The journal entries in particular were very interesting. The researcher would increase the length of the

project by two weeks if repeated. The reason for this is to provide more time to summarize the dialogues throughout the prior six weeks of discussion. The researcher believes there would have been a greater impact with this addition.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS, CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

In summary this project focused on communicating scripture through technology in a postmodern generation. At the end of a six week journey this model intentionally sought out to accomplish this particular ministry focus. The researcher did not expect to experience an outpouring of interest from others. Face book is set up so that friends of friends can connect and weigh in on whatever is on the mind of their friend. The second day of the first week the researcher had over 50 requests to join the group that was set up for the dialogue. Other members in this context were aggressive in trying to join the project. So in an effort to meet this need and not overload the project the researcher created another profile so that others could participate. By the fourth week there were over 400 people talking about the Word of God from week to week.

There were challenges that are worth noting. The researcher learned that you have to be very intentional in how you communicate especially when using technology. Everything has to be thought out and precise communicating is monumental. It is not necessary to have high intellect but it does not hurt the cause. The researcher was able to navigate through these challenges as a critical thinker. There is great attention to detail in formulating the various components of communication. The researcher also learned that in addition to communicating with precision one must be in tune with technology to some degree. You do have to be familiar with basic computer functions to take advantage of

the possibilities of social networking. Fortunately the researcher was working with people in this context who had a good grasp on the concept of social networking.

The researcher also discovered that it would not be possible to isolate ministry to only social networking based on the simple fact that generational diversity will not allow optimal results across the board in most ministries. In the researchers context based on age demographic the postured position of hope is a bit more encouraging. The researcher is well aware that there are other factors that should be considered in addition to age. There may even be a learning curve that might be necessary regardless of age.

The researcher learned that it is also important to have someone designated to monitor the dialogue on a consistent basis. The reality is that there is a great potential that can easily become uncontrolled. For example if five people join the social network that is in place for the ministry they automatically bring their baggage. Meaning, every person that is connected to them is now connected to the social network profile set in place. This is good, but it can be overwhelming.

There has to be accountability to assure that the standards set for the profile are upheld, and also from a relational perspective there has to be some interaction with those persons who are now connected.

There is a level of fear involved with some when it relates to sharing ideas in an online community. The fear factor decreases when you increase your level of understanding. The researcher discovered that the more familiar the individuals are with technology the greater the benefit. In addition to this the fear factor diminishes when you realize what is at stake, and what is really in the heart.

The researcher would like to admit a subtle question that crossed minds once or twice during the six week project. Are we truly communicating or just passing on information? How much of what is actually stated really able to connect us to the heart of what we are saying? There is no way to clearly define it in all in such stringent timeframes, which is why further study must be accomplished.

REFLECTIONS

As the researcher reflects on this model enthusiasm is skyscraping the peaks of heightened ministry clouds at this juncture. The researcher has tapped into something felt to be extremely pregnant and profound with possibility. The researcher admits that the condition in which technology must address effectively is cumbersome. Technology cannot be guaranteed or asserted as a single solution to a multifaceted problem. The researcher will say that it isn't an awful place to start chopping away underperformed communication in hopes of productive results. Potential is untapped and when individuals collectively decide to use tools that are available to them to maneuver in a desired direction there are heightened expectations.

God uses passion to work God's purpose. The researcher has a hunger to communicate from the inside out. There are no stopping mechanisms great enough to alter direction. Tools such as technology are manipulated for the good. Social networking is a door opener to reach into more lives. There must be a forward look to improve action, otherwise we are simply walking when we should be stepping in. How long would we be able to avoid upward possibility because of our own strongholds and fears?

The researcher understands this model to be ever-changing. If in the event that it is not open to modification it has at that very moment strangled any opportunities of

embracing the substance of what it stands to do. Technology has already advanced further as the researcher reflects on this six week model. Therefore there cannot be a stopping point in how this model impacts ministry.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the researcher considers communication to have a primary role in shaping consciousness. The substance is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and when it is talked about communities are shaped with a greater perspective. This Hip Hop culture is a prime target to see how community is shaped. The voice of Hip Hop is loud and impressive. It is a voice that refuses to be ignored on many levels. The Church has to be just as bold. Everyone else is. There are no pause buttons on the lips of outside communicators.

Our message is unchanged and pure, but our method needs to be ever evolving. The sooner we grasp the fact that we are profane anyway, the better. The polluted environment of the profane world also mutates humans over time.¹

This model proved to build relationships in some cases, and in others it did not. Communication was impacted greatly in terms of methodology. The context of ministry is growing at an incredible pace to become more receptive to technology and its use in the church. The ministry context now has an impressive website to evangelize and disciple the church and community. As a result the ministry context is experiencing growth in membership. The context of ministry has grown from 150 members to 500 members plus. Technology has definitely remained included in this growth. For example

¹Thomas B. Dozeman, *Holiness and Ministry: A Biblical Theology of Ordination* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008). 86.

when new converts are baptized, their testimonials are video recorded and shared with the congregation.

In the assimilation, process new members are asked how they heard about the ministry. Over 75 percent of the responses suggest that they heard about the church through the website! The website is inclusive with uploaded sermons, weekly inspirational scriptures, an event calendar, a listing of all ministries, and ways to receive prayer. There are additional areas on the website to connect with the church community through email and blog.

There have been advances in setting up small groups on Facebook and building a Twitter and YouTube profile for the ministry context. Based on the astronomical amount of outside interest of others during the project, the researcher is in the process of creating a profile to embrace ongoing communication of the Bible through social networking.

Television screens are now active in the ministry context and an Audio/Visual team has been established that meets once a month to address the needs of this ministry in the life of the church. The ministry context is connecting in a variety of ways, and seems to be advancing with the assistance of technology.

The researcher implemented this model in a way that did not include a continuation mechanism. The researcher was open-minded to the possibility of a receptive response from the ministry context but this did not include a plan of action that could continue the model including growth. The researcher would recommend more emphasis placed on this area in future models. The researcher would also suggest that the reader would keep in mind that funding may be needed in the continuation phase.

There are costs involved in website initiation as well as purchasing equipment for the ministry of technology. The researcher was fortunate to be in position to seek partnership and sponsors. The researcher was in position to maneuver advantageously based on the production that this model provided. In light of the ministry context and its history, these findings and opportunities were above and beyond expectation. In the mind of the researcher this model was effective based on the findings.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

Questionnaire

1. How often do you read your bible?

- a. daily
- b. weekly
- c. monthly
- d. never

2. How often do you discuss what you have read in your bible?

- a. daily
- b. weekly
- c. monthly
- d. none at all

3. Do you read your bible with the use of technology?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Sometimes

4. How important is it for you to spend time reading your bible?

- a. Very important
- b. Somewhat important
- c. Not important at all

5. Do you take notes when you read your bible?

- a. Yes I take notes
- b. No I do not take notes

6. Is it helpful for you to have a set time for spending time reading your bible?

- a. Very helpful
- b. Somewhat helpful
- c. Not helpful at all

7. Have you ever used a computer?

- a. Yes I have used a computer
- b. No I have never used a computer

8. Have you ever looked at scriptures on a computer?

- a. Yes I have looked at scriptures on a computer
- b. No I have never looked at scriptures on a computer

9. My age demographic is:

____20-30; ____31-40; ____41-50; ____51-60; ____61-70; ____71-80; ____80 & up

10. My gender is: Male Female Circle One**11. Have you ever discussed scriptures on the computer?**

- a. Yes I have discussed scriptures on the computer
- b. No, I have never discussed scriptures on the computer

12. Do you think it would help you read your bible more if you could have discussions on the computer?

- a. Very helpful
- b. Somewhat helpful
- c. Not helpful at all

APPENDIX B
PRE -POST QUESTIONARRE RESULTS

APPENDIX B
PRE -POST QUESTIONARRE RESULTS

Fig. 1 How often do you read your bible?

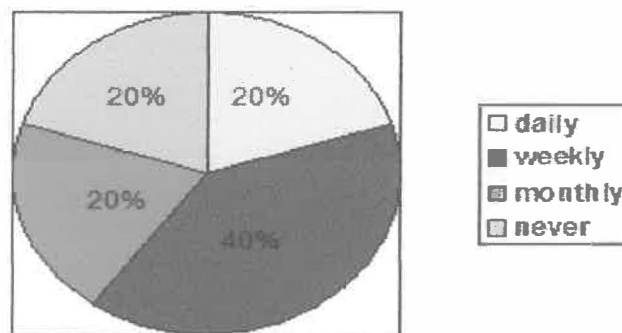


Fig. 2 How often do you discuss what you have read in your bible?

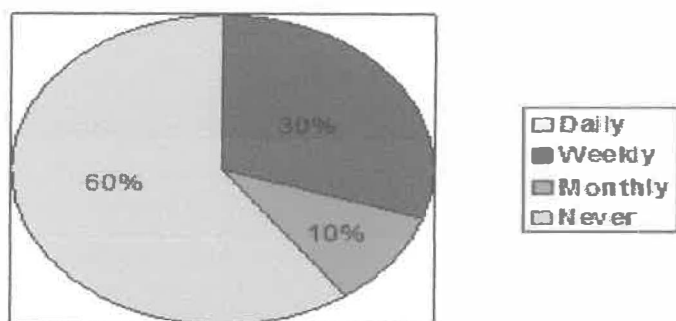


Fig. 3 Do you read your bible with the use of technology?

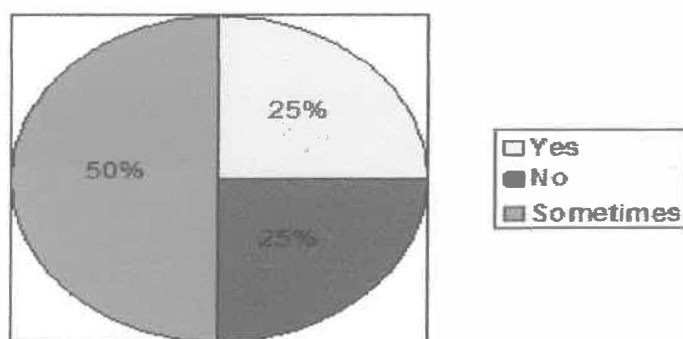


Fig. 4 How important is it for you to spend time reading your bible?

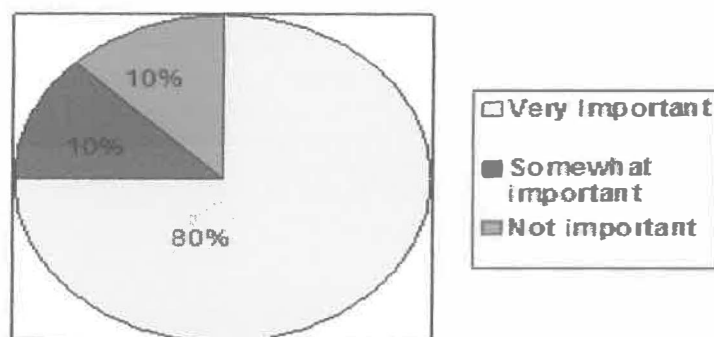


Fig. 5 Do you take notes when you read your bible?

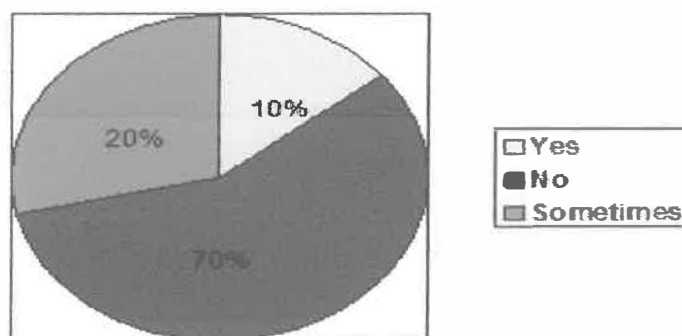


Fig. 6 Is it helpful for you to have a set time for spending time reading your bible?

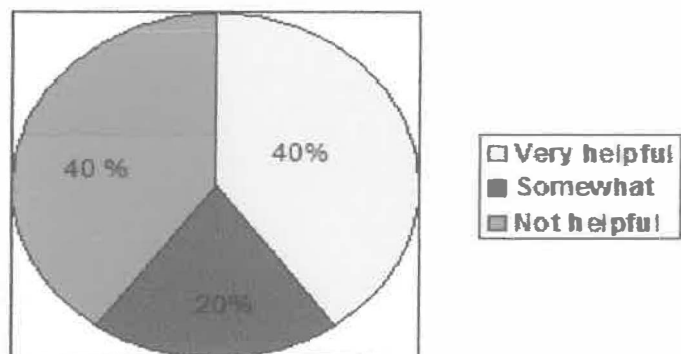


Fig. 7 Have you ever used a computer?

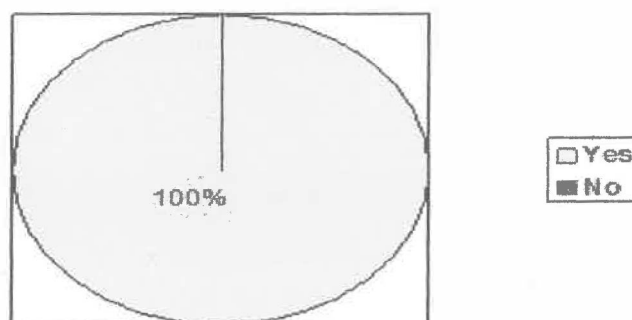


Fig. 8 Have you ever looked at scriptures on a computer?

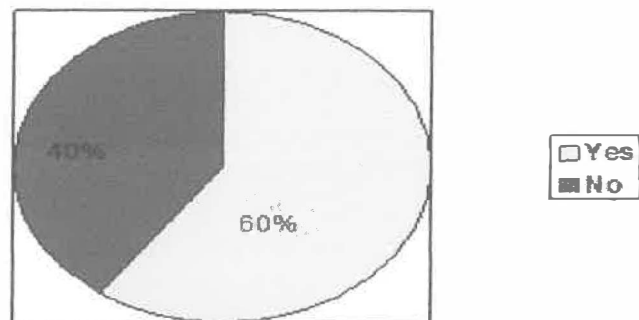


Fig. 9 Age Demographics

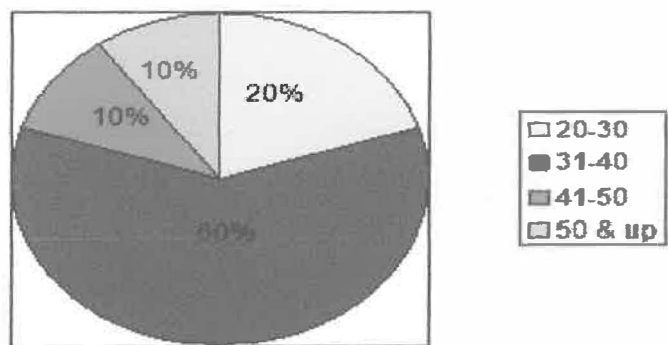


Fig. 10 GenderBreakdown

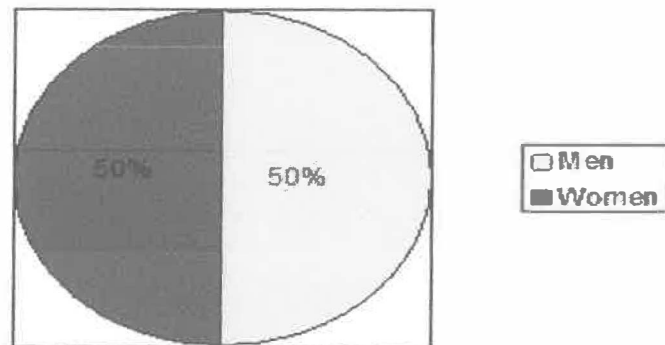


Fig. 11 Have you ever discussed scriptures on the computer with others?

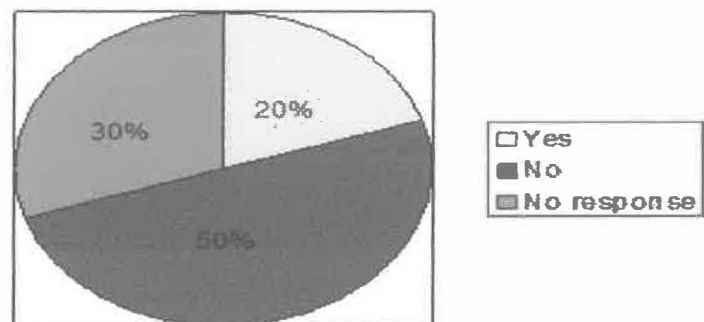


Fig. 12 Do you think it would help you read your bible more if you could have biblical discussions on the computer?

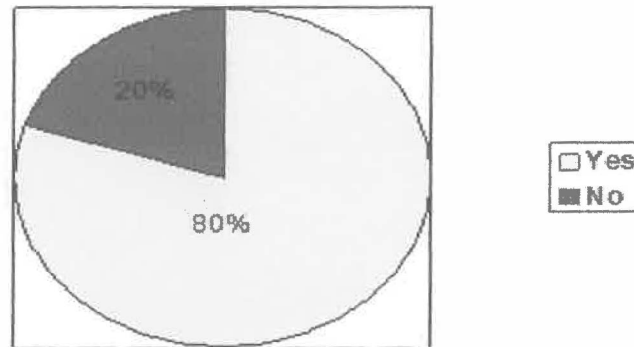


Fig. 1 How often do you read your bible?

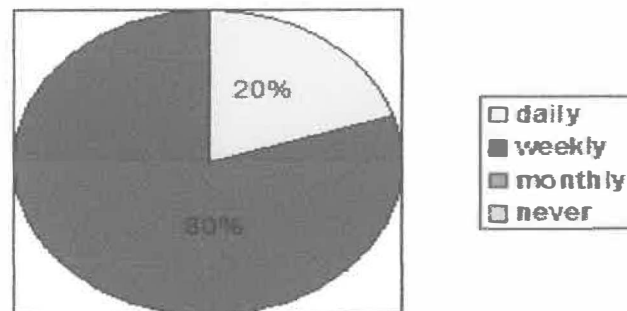


Fig. 2 How often do you discuss what you have read in your bible?

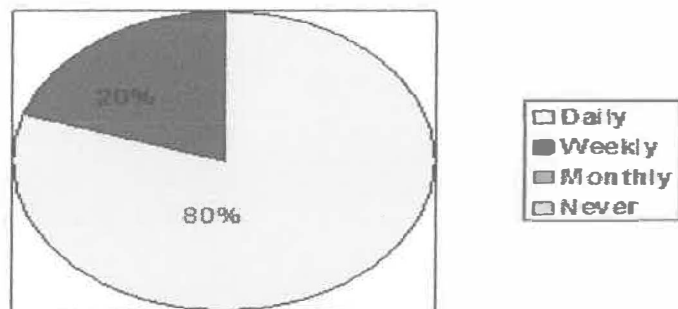


Fig. 3 Do you read your bible with the use of technology?

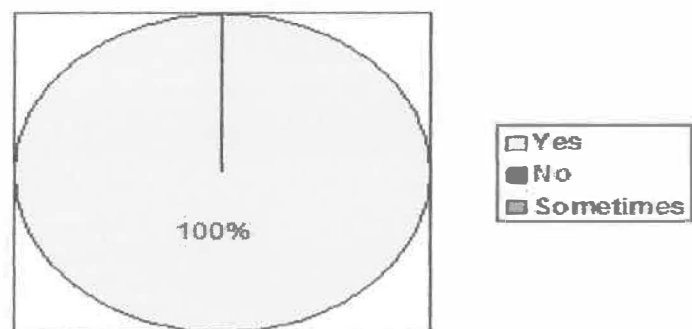


Fig. 4 How important is it for you to spend time reading your bible?

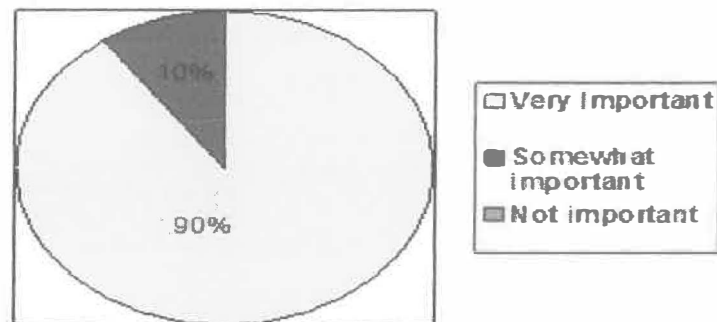


Fig. 5 Do you take notes when you read your bible?

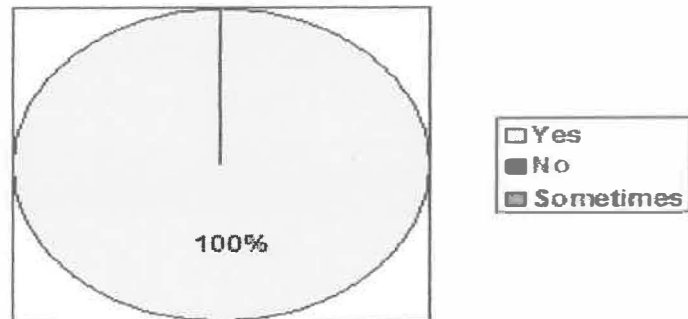


Fig. 6 Is it helpful for you to have a set time for spending time reading your bible?

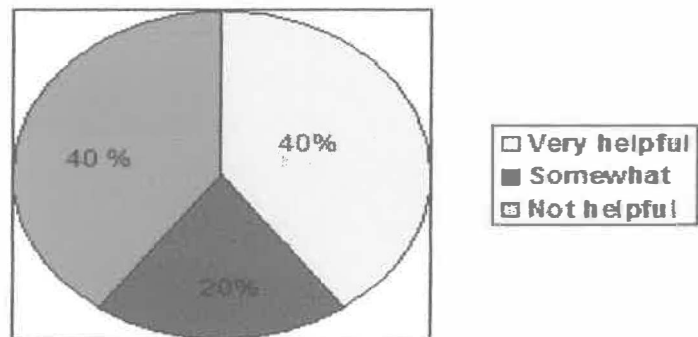


Fig. 7 Have you ever used a computer?

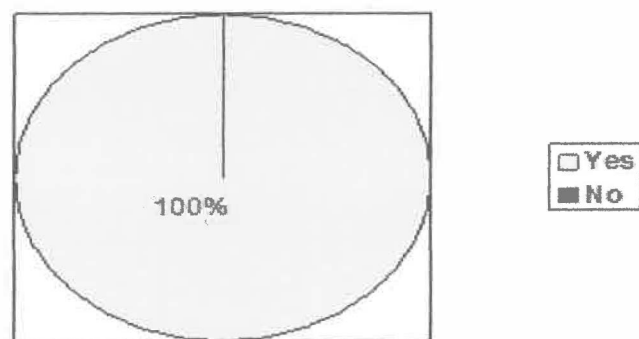


Fig. 8 Have you ever looked at scriptures on a computer?

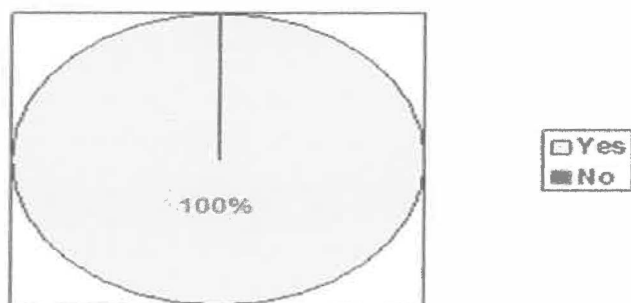


Fig. 9 Age Demographics

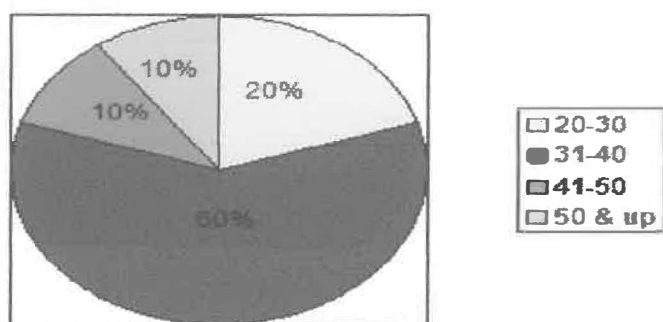


Fig. 10 Gender Breakdown

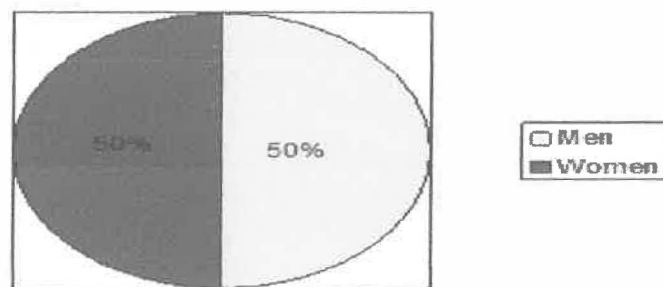


Fig. 11 Have you ever discussed scriptures on the computer with others?

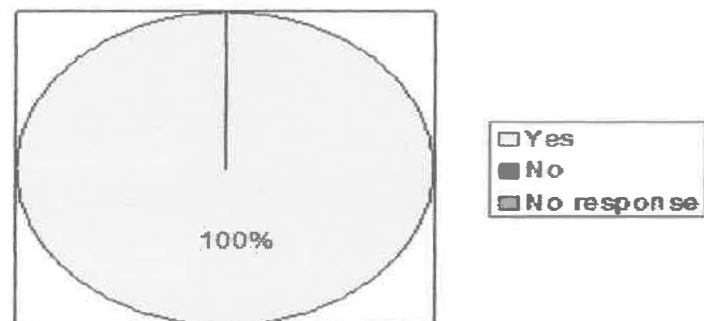
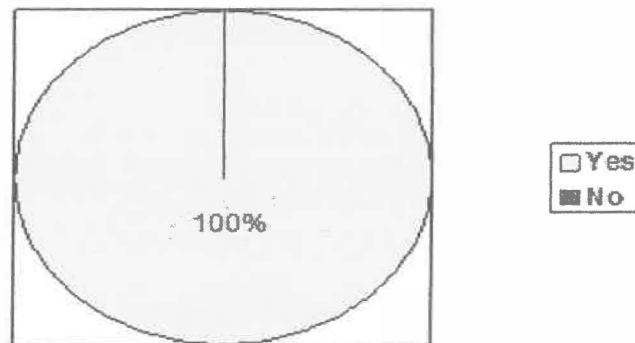


Fig. 12 Do you think it would help you read your bible more if you could have biblical discussions on the computer?



APPENDIX C
INTERVIEWS

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEWS

A portion of this project dealt with engaged conversation relating to technology and its impact on community. The interviews were with experts in the area of digital media, as well as insightful perspectives from a social networking glance.

Interview #1

Question: Is technology needed in our church's today? If so why?

Answer: In every age the church has appropriated the most powerful technology. Over the ages we have witnessed this. Printing presses were transformational, the development of writing was instrumental in teaching slaves to read. Mass printing allowed people to participate in the economy and is essential for the credibility of the gospel. The Church must appropriate new ways of communication. Technology that will increase the justice of the empowerment that happens with new technology is necessary.

Question: How do you see the church being impacted by social networking?

Answer: The church has failed to recognize and fully engage in the implementation of digital technology. The formation of the bible was a way of making the word of god present in the culture of literal writing, and before that it was oral. The printing of the bible was created to empower the community of the culture of the people. It was the first book printed. It was a major step in empowering the bible. That happened in every protestant congregation. It can continue to happen today if we embrace social networking through technology.

Question: What are your views on social networking as a ministering tool?

Answer: At this point it is largely the individual. I don't see the social networking systems being used by congregations. There is major potential if they would tap into it.

Question: Is the Church afraid of technology?

Answer: Yes! they are afraid of digital technology. They are intimidated by it. Professors have mastered print technology but not digital media. Clergy are in power by writing papers and not communicating digitally, so they are afraid of it.

Question: Where do you see the Church 10 years from now related to technology and communicating scripture?

Answer: I expect that there will be some progress. I am currently writing a commentary performance criticism on Marks passion resurrection narrative. The purpose is to reorient biblical scholarship to the exegesis and interpretation of the bible of works that were performed for audiences verses texts read by readers that can be experienced through sound on the internet. The Church is much too slow. The Church has been the slowest to fully appropriate digital technology. The educational, healthcare, and military have been much more aggressive. The church has dropped the ball in responding to this most significant communication revolution of technology. It is because the church has been so definitively shaped by the technology of writing.

Interview #2

Question: Is technology needed in our church's today? If so why?

Answer: Yes. God placed it on my heart to do a 40 day consecration. I researched it, and I wanted to share it with my Facebook friends. I received many inbox emails about wanting to know about Christ. A lot of them go to church but want a stronger relationship. Technology is helping us connect on a common goal of spiritual maturity.

Question: How do you see the church being impacted by social networking?

Answer: Social networking enables individuals to nurture relationships who are not close to each other geographically. The Church could really take advantage of this opportunity to build relationships.

Question: What are your views on social networking as a ministering tool?

Answer: Social networking allows immediate connection. Through our ministry we put on the page that anyone who wants to be a part of what we are doing are free to join. We just ask that they put a request in my inbox, and I would then send out an email. I explain everything we will be doing from a ministry standpoint. This is a powerful tool. I started getting questions from people who had no experience with ministry and ministry ideas. I explained it and broke it down all through social media.

Question: Is the Church afraid of technology?

Answer: I think that's a good question. The Church is changing by default. People are the Church and because we are getting a group of people who are impacted by

technology, the old regime of archaic thought is diminishing. I would say yes the Church is afraid, but that fear is lessening.

Question: Where do you see the Church 10 years from now related to technology and communicating scripture?

Answer: Well I would like to see the Church maximizing all of the opportunities provided to them. I do believe there will be a lot of progress, but I don't know how much. I would like to share something else with you just to let you know the power of social media. There is a Christian magazine who's editor is on Facebook. I submitted a request to have a column in the magazine through the editors face book page. To make a long story short the editor will be publishing my column at an ongoing basis. The reason this is so powerful is because this Christian magazine understands that social media allows them to reach out further. I was granted a major opportunity through social media, and the magazine is impacting at a greater capacity based on a willingness to embrace change and step outside the box. The Church 10 years from now has to embrace technology from my opinion in order to advance as far as it can go.

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